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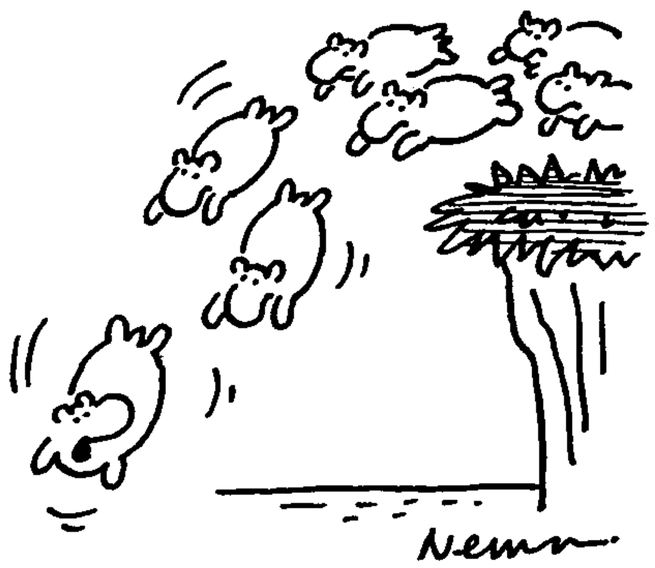
TWELVE acute hospital trusts are now in such financial straits that they can't borrow money as they wouldn't be able to repay it. How did they get into such a mess?

Eye readers won't be surprised to learn that eight of the bankrupt trusts are lumbered with private finance initiatives. So is PFI the chief cause of their woes?

The Department of Health insists not, but whereas two-thirds of the financial basket cases have PFI schemes, of the remaining 164 acute hospital trusts in England only 18 percent are lumbered with PFI. So PFI victims are far more likely to find themselves in the financial shit.

Even the DoH admits that PFI constraints mean hospitals "cannot take some of the short-term measures that other trusts can take to manage financial problems, such as deferring essential maintenance". In fact they often can't defer even non-essential maintenance: if the PFI contract says a hospital must have a lick of paint then a lick of paint it must have, even if that means cutting clinical services.

The 12 hapless trusts will now get a bail-out from the taxpayer. Meanwhile NHS chief David Nicholson insists that "we have to tackle the underlying problems in these trusts no matter how uncomfortable that may be". Alas, more discomfort is likely to be felt by patients and staff than by the politicians who foisted that "underlying problem", PFI, on the NHS in the first place.



"Okay Gordon, you can be leader now"

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ABC

NEWS that Gordon Brown has temporarily blocked the sale of the Tote to a private equity-led consortium will, he hopes, assuage Labour MPs hostile to this aggressive form of capitalism.

While Gordon keeps them sweet (to prevent a left-wing opponent getting the required 44 signatures for a leadership challenge) he must be hoping nobody notices how he encouraged hundreds of PFI contracts to be bought up by private equity in order to create a "secondary market" in the deals. Ownership of hundreds of schools, hospitals and other public services has passed to the secretive funds this way, most of them based in tax havens.

As the *Eye* has often reported, many PFI contracts have changed hands more than once, enabling the private equity money men to trouser billions in profits. But that was before an unwanted leadership battle loomed…

RULES allowing foreign billionaires and bankers to declare themselves "non-domiciled" in Britain to avoid paying their share of tax have supposedly been under review for five years.

Yet a question from Lib Dem shadow chancellor Vincent Cable elicited the admission from Gordon Brown's sidekick Ed Balls that no overall figure for the number of individuals with non-dom status is available; estimates of the tax forgone "are not routinely made" and, though the only justification for the rule is wider economic benefits, "no estimates have been made of the economic benefits to the UK".

The *Eye* has often pointed out that non-domiciled status brings benefits to some New Labour donors and well-connected advisers. We asked Brown's closest aide, Sir Ronald Cohen, over a year ago whether he claimed the tax break (to no avail, see *Eye* 1148) as he was born in Egypt and might well be eligible, despite having lived in Britain since the age of 11. As the Treasury admitted back in 2003, non-dom rules "do not reflect the reality of today's more integrated world", and it is "fair that those with a long-term connection [to Britain] owe a special obligation to support the social structures of the state". But still no progress on reviewing those rules. Surely Gordon hasn't been helping his closest confidant shirk his obligations?

Number crunching

180,000 ■ Discarded votes in Florida due to "hanging chads" which led to doubts over US elections in 2000

100,000 ■ Discarded votes in Scotland due to spoilt ballot papers last week

ANOTHER IT disaster looms after the NHS computer shambles, and this time over an even more cherished aspect of our national life: house-buying.

In 2002 then Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine unveiled "e-conveyancing", whereby contracts, deeds, money and even signatures would all move through a computer system *run by the* Land Registry. Within weeks the idea was blessed with £1.5m from the Treasury under the "Invest to Save" banner, swiftly followed by £15m from the government's "capital modernisation fund".

The system should have been "rolled out" by 2006, but, surprise surprise, nothing has appeared. The solicitors supposed to use it are in any case asking what the point is. Behind the usual platitudes ("21st century services" etc), its only practical advantage is that it will no longer take a few weeks to register changes in a property's ownership after contracts are exchanged and completed. This benefits no one as buyers and sellers can move house on completion in any case.

On the downside, the potential for cocking up by placing everything in the hands of one government IT machine is enormous.

Anxious to show progress, the Land Registry has launched a trial of a prototype called "chain matrix", which monitors the progress of a transaction electronically. Last month officials gave a presentation on the system but were, according to the *Eye's* mole, unable to answer basic questions such as how confidentiality would be guaranteed and how more complex claims would be handled. Pressed on whether the idea would be abandoned if it didn't work, they said there was no chance of that. Haven't we heard that somewhere before?

NOT everybody thinks it's mad for the government to press on with its £600 Home Information Pack (HIP), a report of questionable value which all property sellers will have to provide to purchasers from next month.

Former Labour housing minister Nick Raynsford, for example, still appears to be a fan.

Mr Raynsford supplements his MP's salary as a non-executive director of Hometrack, a firm, he notes in the register of MPs' interests, that provides "valuation and related services in the housing market".

The MP for Greenwich and Woolwich doesn't find space to point out that Hometrack wants to sell Home Information Packs through its joint venture business, "Open Book" – or that he helped introduce the hated HIP into parliament in the first place.

☑ Involve locals in decision making in the town which will prevent unpopular schemes like what Labour have foisted on the town.

Darlington BNP leaflet

"You're never more than six feet away from someone complaining about rubbish collection"

Street of Shame

LAST Tuesday, in its extensive coverage of the bomb-plot trial at the Old Bailey, the *Guardian* reported that Omar Khyam became a militant Islamist after attending meetings addressed by Omar Bakri Mohammed, former leader of extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir.

This is the same Hizb ut-Tahrir whose supporters included Dilpazier Aslam, the trainee hack sacked by the *Guardian* in July 2005 because his "membership of the organisation was incompatible with his continued employment by the company".

Last Wednesday, the *Grauniad* website announced that visitors could now download the latest edition of Islamophonic, "the *Guardian*'s weekly podcast on Muslim life in Britain". And who was the main speaker on this podcast? Taji Mustafa from Hizb ut-Tahrir, calling for the creation of a new caliphate.

If *Grauniad* readers are confused, who can blame them? After last week's convictions of Khyam and his fellow plotters, *Grauniad* hack Vikram Dodd chided the security services for their "preventable errors" and "false assumptions" before 7/7. "They assumed that the threat was primarily from north African jihadists… they discounted the possibility of British-born suicide bombers." But it wasn't only MI5. On 8 July 2005, the morning after the London bombs, the same Vikram Dodd reported that "the bombers were most likely from overseas", including "a number from north Africa, who see Britain as the most important target after the US".

A month later, on 19 August, his colleague Richard Norton-Taylor complained that "scarcely a day goes by without reports of a new terrorist attack being planned and hyped-up claims about the bombings in London". This had been used to justify banning Omar Bakri Mohammed from Britain – even though, Norton-Taylor insisted, there was "certainly no evidence of any link" between his preaching and Islamist terrorism. Yet last week the selfsame Richard Norton-Taylor noted that several of the bomb-plotters had "fallen under the influence" of, er, Omar Bakri Mohammed.

APOLOGY OF THE WEEK

"Profuse apologies for the full-page map we published last week as part of our British surnames supplement, which appeared to place Dundee somewhere near Potters Bar and put Llandudno in five separate locations."

– *Observer*, 22 April

HERE's a rum do. Just before Rebekah Wade started dating her new paramour, former National Hunt trainer Charlie Brooks, a *Sun* photographer spent several days watching his house to see if he was entertaining any women.

Pure coincidence? Or was Rebekah checking up on Brooks, a famous ladies' man whose previous squeezes include John Francome's wife Miriam, before she took the plunge? Surely not.

Nevertheless, she is certainly willing to use her staff to help the romance blossom. Hacks on the Bizarre column were recently instructed to acquire a top-of-the-range iPod and load it up with all Charlie Brooks's favourite songs. Rebekah then gave it to her Old Etonian sweetheart as a 44th birthday present. What a kind gesture!

PS: Brooks's entanglement with the weirdo *Sun* editor isn't his first journalistic partnership. In the 1990s he trained Nigel Dempster's racehorses, in return for which he received countless puffs in Dumpster's *Daily Mail* diary. Rebekah seems to be following Dumpster's example: as we revealed in the last *Eye*, Brooks's latest venture, the London Kriotherapy Centre in Battersea, has had several gushing encomia in the *Sun* since he swept the editor off her feet.

O·B·N

Tony will be appreciated and will be recognised in 10, 15, 20 years time [sic] in a way that isn't possible now. It is almost as though we can never have a prophet in our own country.

DAVID BLUNKETT
The Guardian

Submitted by Anthony Cummins

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

MEANWHILE *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade had a blissful time at her latest office outing, a *Strictly Come Dancing* weekend at a Butlins holiday camp in Yorkshire. Rebekah loves skipping the light fantastic, and for weeks beforehand a professional instructor visited the office to put the editor and other executives through their paces.

Lowlier galley-slaves were less thrilled. In the run-up to the weekend, hacks grumbled that they couldn't speak to the news editor because he was "practising the bloody samba". But what really irked them was the money lavished on this jaunt, at a time when more redundancies loom and the news budget is being cut by 10 per cent. "Everyone was told to buy £45 bottles of fake tan and put it on expenses," says one disgruntled hack. "Yet you can't even get a £20 lunch with a contact through the accounts department at the moment."

TV editor Sara Nathan was ordered to recruit Bruce Forsyth as chief judge, and he happily obliged – for a fee of £45,000. Rebekah also hired herself a personal trainer for six weeks beforehand, at further massive cost. (She has now handed over the trainer to *Sun* hack Derek Brown for six months, at News International's expense, in return for which the paper will run a puff-piece about him.) A vast marquee with a sprung dance-floor was erected, and posses of security guards were employed to keep out ordinary Butlins holidaymakers and *Sun* readers. The total cost of the event, for 60 hand-picked guests, was more than £300,000.

THE *Sun* dipped deep into its well of tastefulness and sensitivity for a front-page headline on 25 April.

Reporting the outcome of the Japanese trial of the man accused of murdering Lucie Blackman and dismembering her body, it announced: "LUCIE'S FAMILY TORN TO BITS".

"THERE still isn't a single openly gay person running a FTSE 100 company in Britain," bemoaned Ben Summerskill of gay lobbying group Stonewall in the *Guardian* following last week's outing of Lord Browne of BP.

"Successful business people who are gay or from ethnic minorities are disproportionately self-made entrepreneurs. That's because they don't see career progression within a conventional corporate structure."

Still, it's not all bad. Writing in the same paper back in November last year, Summerskill was full of praise for the way that attitudes to homo-sexuality had changed in one particular British institution. "A weekly study of the *Mail on Sunday* reveals little current evidence of the historic, and brutish, unpleasantness for which it was once known," he enthused after that paper accepted a Stonewall award for its sensitive coverage of gay issues. "Just as the tectonic plates of party politics appear to be shifting, we sense that the same is happening in Fleet Street."

And which was the paper that outed Browne last week by buying up the spiteful reminiscences of his ex-boyfriend? The *Mail on Sunday*.

THE *Daily Express* was the only paper to defy the injunction granted by the Honourable Mr Justice Eady concerning the circumstances in which BP boss Lord Browne met his former partner, reporting on 2 May that he "picked him out after surfing a sordid gay website".

By an astonishing coincidence, the *Daily Express* is also the only paper whose proprietor owns a website – www.televisionx.co.uk – which promises "girl-on-girl cunt action".

AS BEFITS "the youngest, hottest columnist out there", the *Sunday Mirror* hired "trendy west London nightclub 24" for the launch of Zoe Griffin's new showbiz gossip column.

Alas, on the night the presence of "stars" such as Peaches Geldof, Caprice and, er, the Cheeky Girls was somewhat eclipsed by the behaviour of the *Sunday Mirror* journalists present. Hacks Michael Duffy and Justin Penrose engaged in a full and frank exchange of views during which crime correspondent Penrose received an "accidental" blow to the head which necessitated a visit to Moorfields Eye Hospital. Meanwhile showbiz editor Sean Hamilton had to take his girlfriend home early after she began podium dancing, fell off and cracked her head open.

Peaches' row with a snapper at the end of the night seemed, by comparison, a little dull.

MYSTERY surrounds the departure of *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre for a three-week break. Some colleagues talk of a "sabbatical"; others insist that he is merely taking a well-earned holiday in the British Virgin Islands – one of his favourite places of sanctuary, apparently because it reminds him of life in the 1950s.

Yet Dacre usually has his holiday in August. The last time he went to the Virgin islands in May was four years ago, when he was convalescing after heart surgery. It seems doubly surprising that he should disappear just when his dear friend Gordon Brown needs his support. Is all well with Dacre's health?

Whatever his physical condition, there are growing concerns at his mental state. "Paul is becoming more and more left-wing," says a worried *Mail* wallah. "He's started hating the rich." Though Dacre himself earns more than a million pounds a year, the recent *Sunday Times* rich list so enraged him that he ran a thunderous leader-page article by former *Mirror* hack David Seymour. "This has been the greatest decade in British history for the very, very wealthy," it declared. "But just look at the list of the richest people in this country and notice what a motley bunch they are."

Can a merger between the *Mail* and *Socialist Worker* be far behind?

HOW blogs work: on March 16 freelance left-wing hack Stephen Pollard used his little-read blog to spring to the defence of a government spin doctor who had refused national newspaper hacks entry to a Downing Street photo opportunity for Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Miliband. Pollard raged that it was "disgusting" to insult special adviser Sarah Schaefer.

Roll forward a few weeks and we again encounter Pollard, this time because he has been appointed as one of two approved bloggers by the supposedly right-wing *Spectator*. How are the two events related?

Well, the *Spectator* is edited by Matthew d'Ancona. And Sarah Schaefer, the New Labour spin doctor defended so nobly (and of course entirely objectively) by Pollard, is otherwise known as Mrs Matthew d'Ancona, wife of his new employer!

"MAN UTD BLOODY FIGHT SHOCK", shrieked the front page of the *Daily Star* on 23 April, over the news that footballer Cristiano Ronaldo and colleagues had attended a cage-fighting contest – or, as the paper termed it, a "shock bloodfest" in Manchester.

At "the most brutal sports show ever staged in Britain… the Ultimate Fighting Championships, the contestants kicked, punched and scratched each other to bits", the paper reported. "Health campaigners have called for the sport to be banned and the Manchester show is likely to reignite their fight. Anti-violence campaigner Steven Adams, 54, from Manchester fumed: 'This should be banned immediately. It's not sport – it's the equivalent of a dog fight and it glorifies violence to a horrifying extent.'"

Quite right too. Everyone involved in the sport should feel thoroughly ashamed, as this snap from the rival "Cage Rage 21: Judgement Day" championships held at Wembley on 21 April clearly shows.

"PRINCE Harry will be a prime kidnap target for insurgents in Iraq, a commander in the Mahdi army, the Shia militia, has told the *Guardian*," gasped the front page of that newspaper on 28 April. "'We have people inside the British bases to inform us on when he will arrive,' claimed Abu Mujtaba… Not only us, the Mahdi army, will try to capture him but every person who hates the British and the Americans will try to get him."

What inspired Abu Mujtaba to come up with this brilliant idea? Perhaps he had read the front page of the *Observer* six days earlier – which reported that "Iraqi militia groups have already hatched detailed plans to seize Prince Harry as a hostage… Some of the most notorious paramilitary factions in southern Iraq claim that informants placed inside British military barracks in Iraq have received orders to 'track' the movements of the third in line to the throne."

That is more than editors at the *Guardian* – which is, lest we forget, the *Observer*'s sister paper – appear to have done.

LOUISE ARMITSTEAD was understandably excited. "Last week I stumbled across one of the best billionaire bust-ups ever," she gasped in her *Sunday Times* Prufrock column on 29 April. "I heard rumblings that Sir Alan Sugar, star of the BBC's *Apprentice* programme, had fallen out with Richard Desmond, owner of the *Express* newspapers."

And, she discovered, it's all true! Sugar now refers to Desmond as "the schnorrer". There was even photographic evidence: after collecting £30,000 in damages from Dirty Des, Sugar posed outside the *Express* HQ holding a spoof cheque from "Porno Bank plc".

So where did Armitstead find this story, a-stumbling and a-rumbling? Might it by any chance have been the full account of the bust-up – complete with the same photograph – that appeared in *Eye* 1181, a mere month earlier?

FOOTBALL NEWS

ANOTHER exclusive from Paul Kelso, ace "Digger" on the *Guardian*'s sports desk, claiming that FIFA president Sepp Blatter is "set to tackle allegations that the organisation is corrupt by referring cases involving executive committee members to the ethics committee headed by Lord Coe".

Kelso hasn't been reading his own paper. When Blatter appointed Coe last September, the *Guardian*'s Duncan Mackay pointed out the fix: Coe agreed to ignore any allegations before that date, walling off two decades of kickbacks for contracts (*Eyes passim*). The only corruption since has been Blatter covering up the World Cup ticket rackets of vice-president Jack Warner. Maybe Blatter, about to be re-elected, is "set to" report himself?

In the real world far from Farringdon Road several wannabe FIFA presidents have their campaigns ready to roll should Blatter, whose office has already been raided by Swiss fraud squad detectives investigating the bribes scandals, get a second visit.

The *Guardian*'s pro-Blatter stories are planted by his personal spin doctor Peter Hargitay. Blatter, in Delhi last month stroking the Asian vote, was enraged to find the *Times of India* dredging up Hargitay's dirty history of spinning for Union Carbide after a leak at their Bhopal chemical works in 1984 killed thousands and maimed many more.

"To be honest I never visited my grandmother that often"

Mossballs

"I'M SORRY to say this, but the endorsement given to Moss by Sir Philip Green and the deeply hypocritical fashion industry makes them complicit in promoting this drug culture," declared *Daily Mail* columnist Amanda Platell on 14 April. "What kind of society tolerates her being a fashion icon and role model for the young?"

A clue might be provided by the paper that has devoted no fewer than 774 articles to the model since her cocaine use was exposed in September 2005, 55 of them in the last month alone: the *Daily Mail*.

Number crunching

£1m ■ value of contract with high street chain H&M which Kate Moss lost due to drug use being exposed

£3m ■ value of contract with high street chain Topshop which Kate Moss won since drug use exposed

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Everything MOSS go! Frenzy for Kate Gear…Fashion fans ransacked the rails at Topshop last night at the launch of Kate Moss's clothing line… A spokeswoman for the chain said: 'Most of the things have been bought in large volumes.'"

– Sun, 1 May

"You MOSS be joking: Fans' verdict on Kate Clobber… Kate Moss's Topshop range was branded an overpriced flop by fashion fans last night as the clothes got a mixed reception… Topshop said nothing had sold out."

– Sun, 2 May

SUPERMODELS 1

KERBER

UP TO THE HILTON!

SENIOR Conservatives are wondering what the point is of being in the shadow cabinet. After decades of working their way up, they finally get the chance to direct party policy only to find the mysterious former business guru Steve Hilton has already done it for them.

He decides the outcome of meetings in advance and orders the U-turns that take the party away from its old image. No one is closer to David Cameron, not even fellow old Etonians.

Westminster hacks are as baffled as Tory apparatchiks by his influence because Hilton never gives interviews. So secretive is he, he has no official title and his name doesn't appear on the Conservative party's website.

Hilton's marketing philosophy is indeed obscure, but you can still find it in the odd specialist bookshop. In 2003, while he was still with his social marketing consultancy, he co-authored *Good Business*, a neglected guide for corporations on how to soften their image by getting ethical. Hilton's leather jackets and tatty T-shirts provoke deep suspicion among Tory traditionalists, but *Good Business* shows that he's a Conservative to his core. "Capitalism is a good thing," he declares. Corporations create jobs and wealth. Market-based economic policies have lifted millions out of destitution in Asia, and only business leaders can tackle Africa's poverty. Yet environmentalists and anti-globalisation campaigners attack them, and it is the job of his consultancy to lead the fight back.

Hilton is giving the same advice to the despised Conservative party as he gave the despised corporations. He tells both that "you", a member of the public able to consume or vote, are like the "cute donkey in the movie *Shrek*". (Incidentally, all business gurus write as badly as this, so *Eye* readers shouldn't hold it against Hilton.) You are menaced by the "evil king's men" – anti-business protestors in the past, Ed Balls, perhaps, or Alastair Darling now. "But amazingly you are saved from a miserable fate by… no, not a ruggedly handsome hero/pneumatically sexy heroine but by a hideous green ogre. What a sight he is! The ogre is shunned by right-thinking people, banished to the fringes of society, destined to live out his days in a disgusting swamp with nothing but maggots, parasites and vermin for company. You're grateful that the ogre has saved your life, and now you want to hang out with the ogre, to work with him. And so you embark on a series of exciting adventures, and amongst other things end up ridding the world of the evil king. Hooray!" (Actually, not all business gurus write as badly as this, and *Eye* readers should hold it against Hilton.)

Hilton told Coca-Cola and Nike that the way to avoid bad publicity was to embrace social responsibility wholeheartedly. A few token good works would just be "icing on the shit", as he charmingly put it. This sounds very like what Peter Mandelson and Phillip Gould told Tony Blair in the mid-Nineties: rebrand, get rid of the negatives and power will be yours. But can Hilton make the voters – those cute donkeys – love the hideous ogre who could save them from Gordon Brown?

Their support for the Tories in the May elections is not conclusive. Perhaps they will end up echoing Eddie Murphy's donkey in *Shrek*, and cry: "I just know, before this is over, I'm gonna need a whole lot of serious therapy."

'Ratbiter'

CALLED TO ORDURE

LABOUR'S "Awkward Squad bench" in the House of Commons, just beyond the gangway at floor level, is where rebel Labour MPs have traditionally sat. It was once home to some of the stroppiest, bravest loners in British politics.

Dennis Skinner's latest contribution to Prime Minister's Questions confirmed that this corner of Westminster, for years a seedbed of parliamentary independence, has become moribund and, worse, sycophantic. Today's Awkward Squad bench is a shadow of its old self.

On the day of Skinner's effort people of all political colours were urging Tony Blair to call an independent inquiry into MI5's behaviour after the 7/7 London bombs attack. Would a supposedly maverick MP like Skinner not agree that the Establishment seemed to be involved in something fishy?

Alas not. Given a prime slot at PMQs, the 75-year-old Skinner ran a vain hand through his thick grey hair and feebly told Blair to hold an inquiry instead into the events of 1992's Black Wednesday. This was a joke request intended only to ridicule David Cameron. A packed Commons gave a polite, embarrassed laugh – as happens almost every time Skinner nowadays creaks to his feet. An awkward moment, indeed, but not in the noble sense of that adjective.

Skinner, MP for Bolsover, has long considered himself chief of the Awkward Squad and prides himself on grabbing pole position at the end of the bench, just near Labour's Chief Whip. A trawl through his contributions to debates in recent years, however, suggests that this formerly much-feared champion of Derbyshire coal miners has become a tribal bore, easily brushed aside by Blairite ministers. They almost invariably just laugh at his contributions before moving on quickly to their next centre-right policy.

Sitting beside Skinner is often the burly figure of Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton NE). Having done several years as Robin Cook's PPS, Purchase, 67, might be expected to speak out strongly against Tony Blair's foreign policies. The oracle has remained silent, though. Purchase and Skinner prefer to get their kicks by shouting unoriginal abuse at Tory frontbenchers. Skinner, in particular, likes to accuse George Osborne and David Cameron of taking drugs and of being Etonians. Two years ago the young Tories would sometimes blush at these heckles but now they just ignore them.

Purchase was spectacularly squashed the other day when he tried to derail an attack Cameron was making on Labour's pensions policies. Cameron swivelled on the puce-faced Purchase and noted that it was alright for him because he had been an MP for years and was in line for a big fat pension.

Further down the Awkward Squad bench can be found the form of Chris Bryant (Rhondda), the onetime Tory activist who spent many of the past 10 years sucking up to Blair but was never rewarded with a ministerial job. Claire Ward (Watford) also quite often rests her buttocks on the bench. Ward is a long-standing favourite of 10 Downing Street and is currently a Whip. A Whip? Sitting on the Awkward Squad bench? But she is not the only one. A Uriah Heapish Whip called Dave Watts has also taken to sitting on the bench, slipping an arm round the shoulders of backbenchers in a casual manner.

Transport minister Tom Harris is another cuckoo in the nest, along with ministerial aides Dan Norris and Iain Wright and a soft-spoken plodder called Robert Flello (Stoke). It all seems a long time since the likes of Dennis Canavan, George Galloway and the late Bob Cryer (and more recently Cryer's son John, until he lost his Hornchurch seat at the last election) could be found on the bench, bristling with socialist rhetoric.

A handful survive from that era. Thurrock's Andrew Mackinlay, a terrific irritant to ministers, remains an Awkward Squad bencher. So does the dandruffed figure of Liverpudlian Bob Wareing, a longstanding opponent of the Iraq war who also had some, ahem, interesting views about Bosnia. There is also Mike Clapham (Barnsley W), but he nowadays is more of a fading matinee idol than a strident champion of unfashionable causes.

Does it matter where MPs sit in the Chamber? Actually, it does. Physical proximity can increase the courage of individuals to speak up. A sort of group courage develops. This is why the Whips and Blairites have been so keen to worm their way on to the bench, often leaving no room for polite rebels such as Kelvin Hopkins (Luton N) and Ian Gibson (Norwich N).

We can only hope that when Gordon Brown becomes Prime Minister, all the disgruntled Blairites will discover the art of parliamentary troublemaking and bring a new sense of verve and mischief to a bench which has recently been much diminished.

'Gavel Basher'

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Accountability means more than standing for re-election once every five years. It means transparency during your term of office too – the obligation to explain what you are doing openly and honestly."

– David Cameron speaking in Bath, 22 March 2007.

"Thank you for your email. I am afraid however that we do not give out that information."

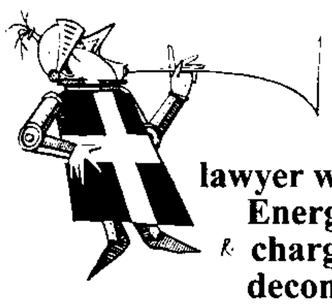
– David Beal, David Cameron's correspondence secretary, in response to an email requesting the names of Conservative candidates selected since 1 January 2007, 23 April 2007.

NON-UGANDAN AFFAIRS

...Lord Browne and Mr Chevalier had dinner with Peter Mandelson and his boyfriend at one of Lord Browne's homes, where they discussed 'European Union policy and Chinese textile quotas'.

Times Online

EYE TOLD YOU SO



***EYE* readers need no introduction to Barbara Thomas Judge, aka Lady Judge, the American lawyer who chairs the UK Atomic Energy Authority and is thus in charge of the nuclear decommissioning programme.**

Ever since her appointment three years ago we have often asked how she can do justice to this job – worth £60,000 for a two-day week – while sitting on quite so many other boards and quangos.

As we noted in our most recent update two months ago (*Eye* 1179), after she took on the chairmanship of energy company Life Ltd: "By the *Eye*'s calculations, busy Barbara now has no fewer than 29 jobs – all at the same time!"

Two weeks ago, MPs belatedly woke up and started asking similar questions. "I am astonished," Lindsay Hoyle MP told the *Daily Telegraph* on 23 April. "Ministers have to intervene to examine whether, because of the importance of the organisation, Barbara Judge is able to devote sufficient time to the job." Edward Leigh MP, chairman of the public accounts committee, then asked the National Audit Office to investigate.

On 30 April *Telegraph* hack Andrew Pierce reported that Leigh intervened "after the *Daily Telegraph* disclosed last week that Lady Judge… has a string of other posts" – a novel meaning of the word "disclosed". Still, better late than never. Perhaps MPs will now start asking a few other questions about milady Judge.

One concerns how she was chosen. In December 2003, as a director of Quintain Estates, Barbara secured a non-executive directorship at the company for her chum Joan MacNaughton, head of the DTI's energy division. (Under "new" Labour, mandarins are encouraged to moonlight in the private sector.) The following spring, by happy coincidence, MacNaughton chaired the selection panel for a new UKAEA chairman – and recommended that Judge should get the job. Industry secretary Patricia Hewitt approved. The DTI duly announced the appointment on 30 July 2004 just as MacNaughton was packing her bags for a well-earned holiday at the luxury French villa of… Barbara Thomas Judge!

THE NEW GIRLS

IT WAS going to take something special to match the farce of George Galloway's antics in Bethnal Green and Bow, but Labour have pulled it off. Just two years after ditching Oona King as their MP, East Enders will now have the chance to vote for her former secretary at the next general election.

Oxford grad Rushanara Ali, now rather ungraciously distancing herself from her old boss, has been selected as Labour's candidate after a nomination process coloured by allegations of racism, sexism and dirty tricks. An initial slate of 67 pretenders included: Rupa Huq, the hip-hop DJ sister of *Blue Peter* presenter Konnie Huq; Johanna Kaschke, a one-time sympathiser of the German Baader-Meinhof group who defected to Galloway's Respeck party in the middle of the selection process; and former Tower Hamlets council leader and ex-bankrupt Helal Abbas, the man who once told a council meeting: "I hope that sane-minded people in this borough do not subscribe to *Private Eye*. If they do then they should get a life."

Another candidate pulled out halfway through the process, claiming the "community's" dream of a first Bengali MP was being robbed by a conspiracy at party HQ to install London Assembly member John "Ronnie" Biggs.

With selection over, the knives are already out for 32-year-old Rushanara. Her male Bengali rivals can't stand having been beaten by a woman. She has already been dubbed "Oona King without the charm".

Down on the Farm

THE more we learn about Defra's gargantuan cock-up over the payment of EU subsidies to farmers the more obvious it becomes that any honest prime minister (dream on!) would by now have ordered a full independent inquiry into how such a grotesque disaster came about.

After all, it is not only farmers who are affected by this shambles. It has already cost UK taxpayers up to £500m, including more than £350m in fines to Brussels – altogether nearly £20 from every taxpayer in the land. Yet only one man has been sacked: Johnston McNeill, former head of the Rural Payments Agency, which was directly responsible for handing out the money (and even then he was allowed to hang on to his £114,000-a-year salary for six months after being sent home in disgrace).

Meanwhile, we learn in a further twist (thanks to figures dug out using the Freedom of Information Act) that 1,082 of the agency's 4,500 staff were given bonuses for the two years when they were creating the cock-up. In 2004-5 one senior RPA official was rewarded with £25,000 for his sterling work. In 2005-6, when the shambles was at its height, three officials got bonuses of £25,000, three more received £10,000 and 542 other employees got £500 each. Total bill to taxpayers? £572,000, and all for losing us £500m. It's like paying a huge tip to people who have just served up an inedible meal.

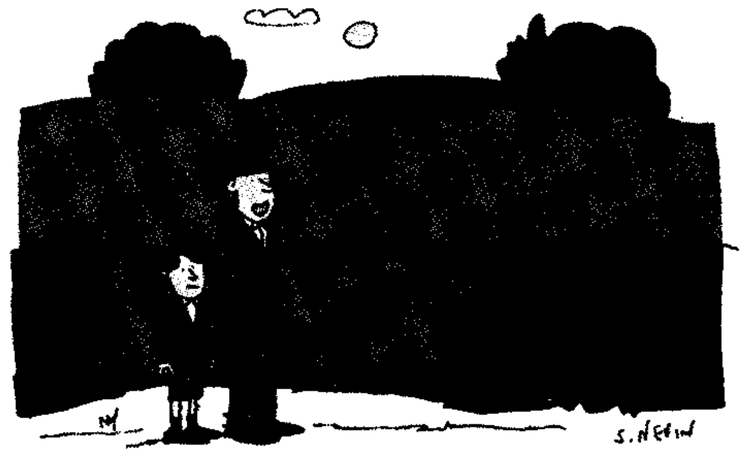
The committee of MPs looking into the scandal then failed to pursue the role played by Accenture (aka Arthur Andersen), hired by the RPA to tell it how to organise the handing out of the money for an original fee of £18m. It has become even clearer that Accenture, having negotiated a contract with Defra as thick as several copies of the Yellow Pages, was at the heart of why the whole thing fell apart.

Thanks to this contract, according to one insider, they were able to "dance rings round Defra… During 2005, it was common knowledge in the RPA and across Defra as a whole that the Accenture delivery was in deep trouble." So obvious was it that when Defra was trying to "outsource the entire Defra IT estate", Accenture was told to back out of the bidding as it hadn't a prayer of winning new contracts until it had sorted the RPA shambles. The main Defra contract thus went to IBM, costing Accenture a fortune.

But there was consolation in the offing. Even though the RPA was offered a cheap stop-gap solution costing less than £1m, which would have enabled most of the subsidies to be paid on time, Accenture was able thanks to its contract to demand an additional £19m for sorting out the mess it had itself created. The result was that the fines payable to Brussels rose by a further £305m.

All this should have been at the centre of the MPs' inquiry. Yet when they asked Accenture to give evidence, MPs got a contemptuous brush-off and simply abandoned the hunt, letting Accenture off the hook in their report. And for the RPA officials who allowed the whole sorry affair to take place, it was bonuses all round.

'Muckspreader'



"One day, son, all of this will be bright yellow"

THE fall-out from the 2005 scandal over the "skimming" of cash from charity donations continues to cause embarrassment for Britain's biggest private sector union, Amicus, and its general-secretary, Derek Simpson.

Eye 1143 told how the Serious Fraud Office was tipped off by Amicus member David Beaumont, who had received internal union documents concerning Simpson's side-kick Les Bayliss and donations to the children's charity, Express Link-Up. Bayliss's friend Steve Sampson had raked off 10 per cent "commission" from an £80,000 donation the union made to Express Link-Up after "introducing" the union to the charity. Sampson was subsequently jailed for his part in an unconnected fraud.

Rather than congratulating Beaumont for bringing this murky episode to light, Simpson began a witch-hunt against those he believed had a hand in leaking the embarrassing material.

Amicus's legal director Georgina Hirsch, who writes a legal advice column in the *Daily Mirror* called "The Right Stuff", was given the task of rooting out the whistleblower. Foremost among those under suspicion were three senior Amicus officials, Des Heemskerk, Cathie Willis and Jimmy Warne, who were all suspended in September 2005 and sacked the following March. All lodged employment tribunal cases claiming unfair dismissal.

First up has been Heemskerk, whose barrister told the tribunal: "Amicus fell well below the standards that would be expected of any ordinary commercial employer, let alone an employer ostensibly committed to protecting the rights of employees."

Having heard all the evidence the tribunal found unanimously in favour of Heemskerk. In its judgement of 15 March the tribunal says it "had reservations regarding the evidence given by Ms Hirsch … In general terms Ms Hirsch's evidence was unconvincing."

Although TUC guidelines dictate that Amicus should now reinstate Heemskerk, general-secretary Simpson told the tribunal this will happen over his dead body.

Ah, this great movement of ours!

'Blackleg'

HIGH PRINCIPALS

WEST NOTTS College won't be popular with the Learning and Skills Council after governors rejected plans to outsource construction-related training courses to the privately owned Carter and Carter Group.

Governors acted last week following a unanimous vote by the staff union against the idea, which would have seen any new lecturers in the subject employed by the private sector.

Training company Carter & Carter's stated aim is "to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards in partnership with the LSC and government educational agenda". The Learning and Skills Council returns the love. At the Public Accounts Committee last week, its chief executive Mark Haysom told MPs that further education colleges need to be managed more like businesses and that a "culture change" was needed in colleges to improve the rate of procurement from the private sector.

But as a spokesman for the West Notts union pointed out, "private companies are looking at education for easy pickings, promising shareholders handsome returns. That can only be done by worsening pay and conditions and educational quality, whatever the promises."

Meanwhile Carter & Carter has just announced half-year profits of £3.8m, a 25 percent rise on last year.

TV

Holby Blue (BBC1)

IT'S A working rule in television that, if you haven't got a new idea, you can always just have an old one again. *Holby Blue*, though, is a particularly shocking double example.

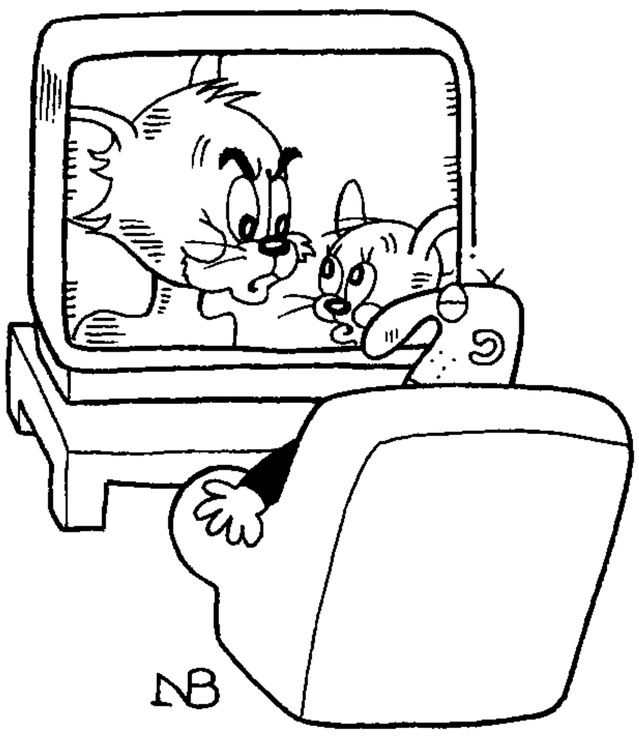
Not only is it yet another bloody police series in peak-time but the cop-shop is located in Holby, the pseudo-Bristol which is already the setting for BBC1's *Casualty* and *Holby City*.

It's obvious why this has been done. In a world with hundreds of screens of all sizes all pumping out entertainments, it's always easiest to find an audience for something they've already had: hence *Spiderman 3*, *Shrek 3* and so on.

Holby Blue, however, isn't precisely a sequel but an attempt to extend the franchise sideways: a sort of Spiderwoman or Young Shrek. And the record of such projects in television is ominously poor. It's true that ITV once got three long-running sit-coms from the characters in a single building – *Man About The House*, *Robin's Nest* and *George and Mildred* – and admittedly *Frasier* spun out of *Cheers*. But numerous other solo shows for the stars of *Cheers* and *Friends* flopped and the story of spin-offs is usually one of diminishing returns: *Knot's Landing* was a poor dilution of *Dallas* and *The Colbys* never achieved the success of its progenitor soap, *Dynasty*.

On the evidence of this third version of the BBC Bristol's caring profession franchise, the Holbys are going the way of *The Colbys*. Although it begins with a swaggeringly zeitgeisty mock TV news report about the threat of terrorism, and there are references to "twenty armed cops at the local airport", the viewers' main reaction to that news is a sudden fear that the drama department is already working on Holby Flew, a peak-time series set around a west country airport.

And, apart from that topical "war on terror" garnish, *Holby Blue* is an Identikit cop show. There's DI John Keenan (Cal Macaninch), a detective who's, well, a bit of a maverick but his superiors tolerate him because he gets the results. Separated from his ex-wife (Tanya from *Footballers' Wives*), he smashes the brake-light of her new man's car in order to get him stopped by traffic cops so that a check can be run on the police computer which reveals that lover boy is... well, you can probably guess.



"If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this programme..."

Mad Macca's other problem, wouldn't you know, is that he's just been given a new detective sergeant who's snooty and university educated and a stickler for filling in the right number of forms before arresting someone. And the new DS looks a bit shifty when asked if he's got a wife and kids which means he'll probably turn out to be gay, which will allow them to do the bits about institutional bigotry in the police force, like *Life On Mars* without the jokes, except that they're already doing that in another part of the cop-shop canteen, where an unreconstructed patrol copper has just been given a feisty young woman as his oppo. When she objects to him smacking her bum, he calls her a "lesbian".

This is all fine if you like this kind of thing yet again but it might just as well be set in Camden or Gretna as Holby, for all it has to do with the mother shows. Spinning *Holby City* out of *Casualty* had a certain neatness because those series feature two units of the same hospital: accident and cardiac. But, in this case, the only link is that the police station is supposedly round the corner from the fictional clinics. The only direct overlap in the opening episode is a single scene in which male nurse Charlie, who Derek Thompson has played in both *Casualty* and *Holby City*, very briefly treats the child of the maverick DI. But, apart from this opportunistic fig-leaf minute, the programme is just another unnecessary melodrama about crime prevention.

It's quite important that this show is not successful, because if it is, there will soon follow Holby Red, set in a west country fire station, and Holby Black, following the pathologists at the local morgue. And then, perhaps, finally Holby Red-Face, set at a television company where the drama department has completely run out of ideas.

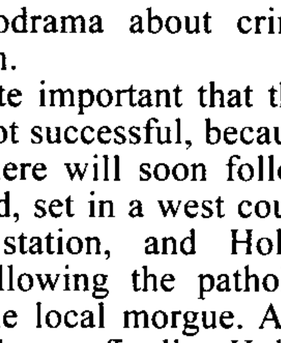
'Remote Controller'

"He's a massive success on a digital channel no one has ever seen"

DUMB BRITAIN

Breakfast show, talkSPORT

Alan Brazil: What was the name of the first man on Earth?
Contestant: Tony.



Alan Brazil: So, to win the tickets for the match, can you tell me the distance in miles between Chelsea's ground Stamford Bridge and the Olympic Stadium in Athens?
Contestant: Is it 50,000 miles, Alan?

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Who rode out of Boston at midnight to warn of the redcoats' arrival: Paul Revere or Billy Butlin?
Contestant: Billy Butlin.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER
WHERE HARVEY GOLDSMITH TRIES TO START AN ENTERTAINMENT CAREER...
BY DOING A BAD IMPRESSION OF ALAN SUGAR
Ken Pyne

MEDIA NEWS

JUST as the first cuckoo traditionally marks the beginning of spring, for several years now each Monday morning has been heralded by the appearance of Princess Diana on the front page of the *Daily Express*.

In recent months, however, another top-of-the-week phenomenon has been observed: the topic of that week's *Panorama*, no matter how half-baked or inconsequential, will lead the BBC's morning news bulletins on both television and radio.

Following 23 April's "phone-ins everyone was saying were a rip-off a while back are still a rip-off" exclusive, 30 April brought an even more shocking scoop: "Pakistan's cricket coach Bob Woolmer, who died of strangulation earlier this year, was also poisoned, a BBC investigation has learned."

In this revelation *Panorama* only trailed behind the *Mirror*, *Star*, *Sun*, *Sunday Mirror*, *Sunday Times*, *Times*, *Express*, *Mail*, *Independent*, *Guardian*, and *Telegraph*, all of whom ran similar stories up to five weeks previously. As the *Eye* noted two issues ago, however, the papers were far from united in their theories as to what particular poison was used. Could the BBC perhaps shed some light?

Er, no. "There was a drug in his system that would have incapacitated Mr Woolmer," reporter Adam Parsons solemnly intoned. "The specific details of that poison are now very likely to offer a significant lead to finding his murderer."

THE *Times* business section accompanied its 2 May article on Channel 4's annual report with two informative tables: "What the TV bosses are paid" and "Who is watching what".

From these we learned that BBC boss Mark Thompson receives £619,000 while his channels enjoy a 34.5 percent of the viewing audience, whereas Sky chief James Murdoch trousers a hefty £2.74m in return for pulling in...

How curious! While both salaries and ratings were supplied for the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Five, the percentage of viewers who bother to tune in to Sky was curiously absent. Could this be because with Sky One registering a dwindling share of just 1.22 percent since it was dropped from Virgin Media packages in February, the scale of the graph was not small enough to do it justice?

FREUDIAN SLIP OF THE WEEK

"WE COULD have replaced Dan, but the thought of having to do a half-cocked production into the summer didn't thrill us."

– Equus producer David Pugh on the failure to persuade another big-name actor to strip off for Daniel Radcliffe's role, Sunday Telegraph

"THE British population watches television for more hours per day and reads less than any other nation in Europe. Our children are Europe's most obese," psychologist Dr Aric Sigman told MPs last month. "Reducing television viewing must become the new priority for child health."

His urgent recommendations – that children must be banned from so much as seeing a television before the age of three and limited to an hour's viewing a day between the ages of seven and 12 – were eagerly seized upon by leader writers and Polly Fillers from the *Sun* to the *Guardian*.

Dr Sigman certainly knows of what he speaks. He is, as every paper solemnly noted, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. But he was also – although he omits to mention the fact anywhere on his official website – employed for several years in the 1990s as "Ask Aric", the resident agony uncle on *Live & Kicking*, the BBC's three-hour Saturday morning magazine programme for, er… children.

GOING LIVE

FLUSHED with their new sports editor Mihir Bose's success in being the first to announce the resignation of Duncan Fletcher as England cricket coach, producers of the BBC's *Six O'Clock News* decreed that he should deliver his opinion of the story from no less a location than Lord's, the home of cricket.

Sadly, there was no game taking place there on 19 April, so Kevin Geary also had to be dispatched to the Oval to ask spectators at the Surrey/Yorkshire match what they thought about the news.

THE activities of controversial former Flying Squad detective Tony Lundy and his dubious informants will be the subject of a *Supergrass* drama-documentary on BBC-1, on 16 May. Is it a waste of money?

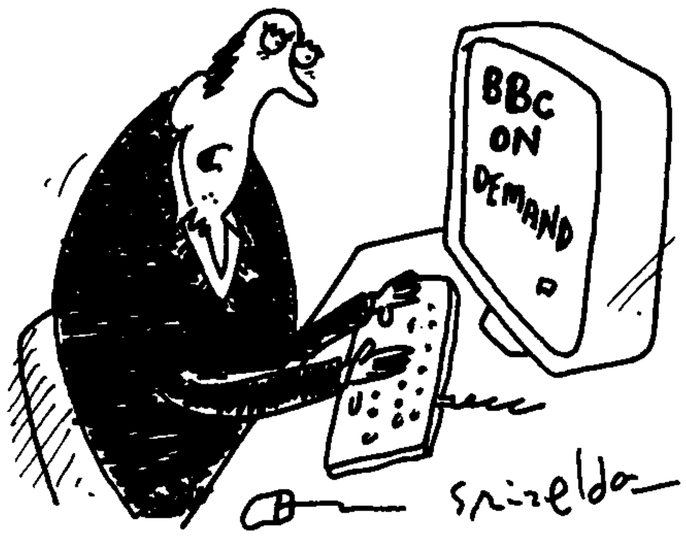
For the past 21 years the BBC has sat on *The Untouchable*, a one-hour investigation by reporter Andrew Jennings into the relationship between Lundy and top gangster and informant Roy Garner. The film was OK'd by Geoffrey Robertson QC, scheduled twice, then killed following pressure from the Met. It remains on a shelf in BBC Manchester, ready to transmit at a moment's notice.

Jennings resigned in protest and went to Granada TV's *World In Action*, where he remade the film with Paul Greengrass. The day after screening in November 1986, South Yorkshire police were appointed to investigate. Lundy went sick, suffering from "stress", and was allowed to resign, avoiding interviews with the Yorkshire coppers. He abandoned plans to build a £250,000 indoor pool complex at his detached Elstree mansion (five bathrooms, all with gold taps) and moved to Spain.

Lundy never nailed Garner. Customs officers did, getting him a 22-year sentence for cocaine smuggling. During his investigation Jennings's Islington home was put under surveillance by a special Yard team hoping to discover which honest officers were passing him information about Lundy.

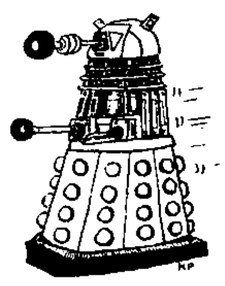
21.45 Al Qaeda
New music show. Hosted by Lakis Lazopoulou.

Cyprus Mail



"I demand you show something worth watching!"

BIRTSPEAK



"In this session I will be talking through in more detail how the Multiplatform, Innovation and Development studio will work – and what my vision is for the Studio. I will explain the brief of the Innovation and Development parts of the studio, and how we fit into the broader Vision Studios business. I will also give you an indication of some of the pressing broader issues for Vision Studios, and how they relate to us. And finally I will say a bit about the kind of values and approaches to our work I will be looking for as we start to make this new Studio live and breathe..." – *Email from Mark Harrison, Head of Multiplatform, Innovation and Development, BBC Vision Studios.*

IN THE THEATRE

WEST END producers normally limit their mention in theatre programmes to a line or two at the top of the title page. After all, punters pay good money for a programme and want to find out about the stars and the show.

Not so Bill Kenwright, who may be letting his considerable vanity get the better of him now that he is appearing as a judge on BBC1's *Any Dream Will Do* talent show. Audience members at the first night of Kenwright's pisspoor production of Somerset Maugham's "The Letter" noticed that the programme credits for stars Anthony Andrews and Jenny Seagrove were considerably less voluble than the entire page given over to their producer. This listed not only nearly every professional show Kenwright has produced but also dwelt at length on various worthy but minor awards he has received, including an honorary fellowship of Liverpool's John Moores University and being made an honorary professor of something called Thames Valley University.

Fleet Street's theatre critics (who loathe Kenwright for his habit of telephoning editors to complain if reviews are insufficiently adulatory) have now started to refer to the whingeing impresario mockingly as "Professor Kenwright".

AD NAUSEAM

LAST autumn the *Telegraph* ran an ad campaign claiming ownership of "Britain's No 1 quality newspaper website". This raised a few eyebrows in the industry where it had been generally assumed that the *Guardian*'s website held the No 1 spot.

Last week the Advertising Standards Agency decided not to uphold a complaint against the ad. It said the No 1 claim "was unlikely to mislead" because the ad made clear the source and period of the data and the fact that it was based on the number of visits to the site (i.e. not the number of unique visitors).

Unfortunately, in the same week new ABCe figures proved the *Telegraph*'s claim could not have been more misleading: a new standard adopted across the industry uses unique user data (how many visitors) as opposed to visit metric data (how many visits). These figures are independently audited and show that telegraph.co.uk is indisputably not "Britain's No 1 quality newspaper website", nor indeed is it No 2.

The *Telegraph* admitted as much in its correspondence with ASA, saying it would take audited UK unique user figures into consideration if it ever ran a similar campaign. In which case we can look forward to "Britain's No 3 quality newspaper website" disabusing anyone misled by the last campaign.

YET another example of startling originality in advertising, this time spotted at Victoria Station.

To the left, a poster from accountants Deloitte asking us to "See the Bigger Picture". Next to it, a poster for Artemis Investments inviting viewers to "Look at the Big Picture".

Both were blissfully unaware that thanks to an inspired piece of media buying, bemused punters were looking at two "big pictures", but seeing just the one tired old cliché.

Number crunching

2.5mins

■ time given on BBC 10 o'clock news, 30 April, to launch of Kate Moss's clothing range for Topshop

1.5mins

■ time given on BBC 10 o'clock news, 30 April, to the possible death of several homeless people inside burning buildings in Manchester

SUPERMODELS 2

KERBER

SOMEWHERE IN CHINA.....
DESIGNER ETHICAL BAG MAKING FACTORY
AT LEAST WE'RE BEING THRASHED WITH NATURAL, ORGANIC, FREE-RANGE WHIPS!
THWAKK!!!

HACKWATCH

Time For Bye-Byes

TREBLES all round! Fleet Street's political hacks all said that Tony Blair would resign, and they were right. Maybe they were a bit premature – but surely that makes them all the more prescient...

2001

"Peter Mandelson resignation: Can Blair survive without Dracula?... It is far from certain that Tony Blair will survive the removal of his burdensome double." – Peter Oborne, *Daily Express*, 25 January.

2003

"We Could Be Out of Downing Street by Christmas, Cherie Tells Friends... Fallout from the Cheriegate affair led to fresh speculation last night that the Blairs may quit No 10 before the end of the year." – Simon Walters, *Mail on Sunday*, 12 January.

"Can Tony Blair survive without him [Alastair Campbell]?... It is almost impossible to conceive of one man carrying on without the other." – Peter Dobbie, *Mail on Sunday*, 29 June.

"Can Tony Blair survive the loss of Alastair Campbell?... Losing Alastair will be like losing his right arm." – Trevor Kavanagh, *Sun*, 26 July.

"The [Hutton] inquiry may just have Tony Blair packing his bags before Christmas." – Matthew Norman, *Daily Mirror*, 5 September.

"This weekend, for the first time since Tony Blair became Labour leader nearly 10 years ago, there is serious talk in senior Labour circles that he could step down or be driven out of office." – Peter Oborne, *Mail on Sunday*, 28 September.

"Tony Blair has never been more imperilled... He may not survive." – Peter Oborne, *Daily Mail*, 6 November.

2004

"Can Blair survive Hutton's verdict? Will 2004 be the year of Gordon Brown? Perhaps he will at last secure the succession that Tony Blair promised him." – Andrew Alexander, *Daily Mail*, 2 January.

"Blair begins fight for his political life in the toughest 48 hours he has ever faced... This week could even see the PM quitting Downing Street." – Macer Hall, *Daily Star*, 25 January.

"She [Cherie] wants her husband to leave Downing Street this year... Cherie sees this September, her 50th birthday, as a possible deadline." – *Evening Standard*, 12 February.

"Brown May Quit Britain For Top Job at IMF. Move Would Bring End to No 10 Ambitions." – Larry Elliott and Charlotte Denny, *Guardian*, 5 March.

"Friends of the couple are convinced Mr Blair will step down 'within the next two years' to allow Cherie to pursue her legal career." – John Kelly, *Sunday Mirror*, 7 March.

"Tony Blair could be gone by summer." – Iain MacWhirter, Glasgow *Herald*, 17 March.

"Will Blair Quit This Summer?" – Patrick O'Flynn, *Daily Express*, 24 April.

"He is at the mercy of events and people he cannot control. How long can Blair survive?" – John Kampfner, *Daily Mail*, 27 April.

"Tony Blair is in the middle of a crisis that could see him out of office within the next eight months... Brown's supporters are already laying plans for his leadership campaign, which could be launched the moment Blair agrees to go – possibly this summer." – James Cusick, *Sunday Herald*, 2 May.

"Piers Morgan's gone... but can Tony Blair be far behind?" – James Cusick, *Sunday Herald*, 16 May.

"After the Defeat: Can Blair Survive the Humiliation?" – Glasgow *Herald*, 12 June, following council elections.

"Battling Tony Blair today starts his toughest week in politics... Despite denials from Cabinet allies, rumours that Mr Blair is preparing to be pushed out of No 10 continued to rumble last night." – Neil Chandler, *Daily Star*, 12 July.

"Butler Report and By-Elections Could Be Final Blow for Premier. Can Blair Survive the Week?" – Patrick O'Flynn, *Daily Express*, 12 July.

"Is Tony Blair on the verge of quitting?" – *Daily Express*, 13 July.

"Tony Blair was last night putting the final touches to a ministerial reshuffle, as speculation continued that he would not lead his party into the next election." – Christopher Leake, *Mail on Sunday*, 18 July.

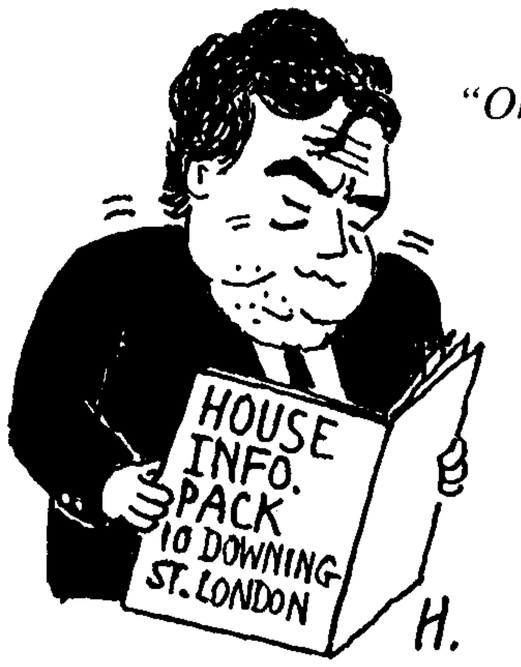
2005

"Blair to Quit In May 2008." - Macer Hall, *Daily Star*, 23 September.

"Tony Blair this week entered a political maelstrom that he may not survive... The betting now must be that Tony Blair will be out of Downing Street by next summer." – James Blitz, *Financial Times*, 4 November.

"How long can Blair survive? Blunkett's resignation will hasten premier's departure." – Kirsty Buchanan, *Sunday Express*, 6 November.

"Can Tony Blair survive?" – Matthew d'Ancona, *Sunday Telegraph*, 20 November.



"Oh no!"

2006

"EXCLUSIVE. BLAIR TO QUIT ON 31 MAY 2007. Tony Blair will resign as Labour leader on Thursday, 31 May, 2007 – and leave No 10 on 26 July, the Sun can reveal." – George Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 6 September 2006.

"Yesterday dawned with Labour MPs taking bets on the likelihood of Tony Blair staggering on as Prime Minister until next May... By lunchtime, Mr Blair's chances of surviving the party conference later this month seemed slim. By the afternoon the political lifespan of the man who led his party to three general victories was being counted in days, and even hours." – Toby Helm, Neil Tweedie and Brendan Carlin, *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September.

"EXCLUSIVE. BLAIR SET TO QUIT AS PM 'WITHIN WEEKS'... A senior minister close to the PM said: 'We've been told to expect an announcement within weeks. Everything is moving very quickly. He could well be out by Christmas." – Vincent Moss, *Sunday Mirror*, 10 September.

2007

"Tony Blair's resignation plans were hit by another leak last night as it was revealed exactly where and when he intends to announce that he is stepping down as PM. Well-placed sources say Mr Blair plans to make the announcement on the steps of No 10 at 11am on Saturday, 5 May." – Simon Walters, *Mail on Sunday*, 18 March.

"Tony Blair is considering announcing his resignation as Labour leader before next Thursday's local elections in an attempt to limit the expected electoral damage...The announcement could come next Tuesday, 1 May." – Andrew Pierce and Christopher Hope, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 April.

"I will make my position clear next week..." – Tony Blair, GMTV, 1 May.

UNFORTUNATE-JUXTAPOSITION-OF-ADVERTISEMENTS OF THE WEEK – Guardian, p. 17, 23 April

theguardian reader offer

Instant shelter

Instent™, just £39.99 inc UK p&p

Up in seconds, and back down in a flash, this ingenious tent has a unique instant pop up frame mechanism, which means you can be out of the sun in just a few moments when required.
To erect, simply open out and pull on cord - it's really that simple.
[illegible] screens located on every side, convenient in [illegible] including [illegible] around [illegible]

Already this year more than 80,000 people have fled their homes as a result of conflict in Sudan, adding to the almost 2 million who have been displaced since 2003. This is an appeal for families living in camps in Darfur who urgently need shelter and household items.

Please help Concern Worldwide today to get life-saving supplies to families before the rainy season sets in.

£25 could help buy plastic sheeting to protect displaced families from the impending rains.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

KHAN DO

JUST AS the Blair era is consigned to the grave, the corpse of "Cool Britannia" breaks out of its coffin and lurches towards the 2012 Olympic Games.

In June, one Keith Khan takes up his post as "head of culture" for the London Olympics, overseeing four years of "celebration" leading up to and beyond the Games. Khan, 43, a darling of New Labour luvvies in the East End and a friend of former Bethnal Green and Bow MP Oona King, believes the Olympics is an opportunity for Britain to "rebrand" itself. According to the *Grauniad* he is "keen to embrace the 'iPod generation' with the use of digital technology and concepts used by websites such as MySpace and YouTube". He tells the *Evening Standard*: "The iconography is as much to do with Pete Doherty and Kate Moss as the Tate Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery." Oh dear.

Mr Khan's previous triumphs include, er, the Millennium Dome and Manchester Commonwealth Games opening ceremonies. Until February he was chief executive of Rich Mix, an "ethnic" arts centre that opened a year ago in Bethnal Green and has to date sucked up more than £27m in public money – despite the fact that the local Bangladeshi community at which it is primarily aimed has proved pretty indifferent to its offerings.

High profile fans numbered London Mayor Ken Livingstone and junior culture minister David Lammy, while other leading Labour figures, including media tycoon and fundraising specialist Lord Waheed Alli, were made board members.

Backed by Tower Hamlets council, which stumped up £4m, Khan went on a spending spree that included trebling costs on a reception area and a doubling of bills for the kitchen. The true horror was revealed on opening day by the centre's trendy wallpaper - featuring a black "gangsta" pointing a gun at a white woman's head. Not exactly the harmonious message Oona had in mind when she extolled Rich Mix as the "East End's very own Tate Modern".

Virtually all the original top brass have since quit over worries about damage to their CVs. Khan himself was off sick with "stress" for three months after colleagues accidentally advertised his position as vacant on Rich Mix's website. He quit in February after securing a handsome pay-off, shortly before chief fundraiser Lord Alli had to beg the Arts Council for yet another cash lifeline to keep the centre afloat.

Trebling of budgets all round!

● **ANOTHER familiar figure from Tower Hamlets who has an exciting new job is the council's former communications supremo Lorraine Langham (*Eyes passim*). She has been recruited as "director of corporate services" for Ofsted on a salary of £120,000 a year. The new position comes just in time for Lorraine. As *Eye* 1177 reported, her Verve Communications company's contract with Tower Hamlets expires in July (after three extensions). As Verve was picking up nearly £1m a year from the council, a new source of income was clearly needed. Happily Lorraine should settle in easily at Ofsted, where her good friend Christine Gilbert, former chief executive of Tower Hamlets, is now in charge - and, indeed, sat on the neutral selection panel which appointed her!**

TO CATCH A NIMMO

CAMBRIDGE council's Lib-Dem leader Ian Nimmo-Smith took exception to the last *Eye*'s story about how the city's former mayor, Cllr John Hipkin, had been kicked off the planning committee and out of the Lib-Dem party after ultra-PC officers complained that Hipkin had made "heterosexist" comments about the need for more "family" homes in the city. The real reason, claims Nimmo-Smith, is that Hipkin wasn't a "team player" and "does not pull his weight".

No doubt all is as Nimmo-Smith claims, although we cannot help but note that when a planning inspector convened an inquiry into Crest Nicholson's plans for 408 one and two-bedroom flats last week, Hipkin, who "does not pull his weight", was in attendance, while Nimmo-Smith, who is the leader of the council, was not.

This is all the stranger as Nimmo-Smith has been heavily involved in the scheme. He is the member of local development quango Cambridge Horizons who negotiated a "Section 106" agreement in which Cambridge council would receive £1.5m from Crest Nicholson if the development goes ahead.

Alas the Environment Agency has repeatedly warned that the site, a former oil depot, is polluted by cancer-causing hydrocarbons. The inspector has already questioned the council's decision to allow the application to be filed without an environmental impact assessment. No doubt Cllr Nimmo-Smith can provide him with an explanation.

PENNY DREADFUL

GOOD to see Southwark council getting tough with council tenants who don't pay their rent on time. Widower Francis Weston, 84, had rented a flat from the council for 47 years without any problems until he received a letter from the housing department bearing the threatening logo: "Won't pay? Can't stay!" The letter said Mr Weston was behind with his rent, was "at risk of losing [his] home" and should "treat this letter with the seriousness it deserves". The amount of arrears? 1p.

Nevertheless Mr Weston hotfooted it to his local housing office to pay the penny he owed. Alas he only had a £5 note on him and staff said they didn't have change. The day was saved when a council officer graciously agreed to pay the penny herself. Mr Weston thanked her - then wisely insisted on a receipt.

PS: Southwark, of course, has form in such matters. *Eye* 1028 told how resident George Hilleard hanged

himself after wrongly receiving a court summons for non-payment of council tax, and pensioner Frossa Carlettides had suffered a heart attack after council contractor CSL (aka "Liberata") wrongly told her she owed £14,500 in overpaid housing benefit. At least tenant Jim Sparks (*Eye* 1116) was not offended by the aggressive letter he received from Southwark's housing department, demanding immediate payment of rent he did not owe, as he had died two months previously.

● **IN MARCH Marina Pepper, the outgoing chairperson of Lewes district council in Sussex, revealed her fondness for wearing no knickers to the aghast readership of a local freesheet, *Viva Lewes* (*Eye* 1180). In the April edition the Lib-Dem councillor makes further profound reflections on climate change, and the chairperson's lot…**

"I slipped naked between the sheets, alone. The feel of lavender scented organic cotton on my bare flesh lifted the spirits. The moment was only slightly marred by a tinge of guilt, owing to the thermostat being at 18.5 degrees – that's a treat in our household. That and the loneliness of it all.

"The daily requirements of suit and civic chain, constantly striving to 'be the change', denying luxury and profligacy, working tirelessly for good. It goes deeper. As we unite behind a common cause, I refuse to lose sight of my common humanity. I still want to express myself as an individual, sensual, woman. I want the excitement, anticipation and apparent recklessness that come with love. I want to lose myself in that cavernous antechamber to our souls we enter only at the point of arousal…"
[cont. p94]

Who said Lib-Dems were boring?

OWN GOAL

THE DIRECTORS of Rochdale football club did not attend the meeting on 25 April in which the council resolved to confer the Freedom of the Borough of Rochdale on the club. Perhaps they were preoccupied with the outcome of a case being heard in the High Court that day.

The Coca-Cola League Two club was in court to answer a winding-up petition from the Inland Revenue, to whom it owes £100,000. The club promised to pay up pronto, so lives to play another day.

Cynics scoffed at the Lib-Dem council's decision to dish out the "freedom" award to the football club and to the Rochdale Hornets rugby league club just before the local elections as a last-minute vote-grabber.

According to Companies House, both teams have overdue accounts – a matter which ought to be of some concern to the council, which lent £50,000 to the Hornets in 2004.

Since 2001 the Hornets have accumulated seven outstanding county court judgments totalling £30,261. But such financial incompetence did not stop council leader Alan Taylor from celebrating. "With these clubs," he announced, "Rochdale will always be nationally recognised."

Not by sports fans, perhaps, but certainly among members of the judiciary!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE THE VISCERAL THRILL OF RIDING... THE WIND IN ONE'S HAIR! THE EXCITEMENT! THE SHEER DANGER!
MAN AND BEAST IN A KIND OF ELEMENTAL FERAL UNION, TAPPING INTO A PRIMEVAL ADRENALIN SOURCE. YEE HA!
COME ON, GENTS, YOU'VE BEEN HOGGING BONNY AND CLYDE FOR OVER TWO HOURS NOW!

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE London borough of Ealing may not be the smartest address, but style and grandeur are being introduced by Mr John Zylinski, an unusual yet generous commercial property developer.

Mr Zylinski, who owns a great deal of property in Ealing, delights in offering local residents bunches of flowers and seems to be highly regarded by the council's planning committee. He was born in Britain and educated at St Benedict's Ealing, but is of Polish descent. Indeed, a gushing profile in the *Ealing Gazette* insists he is *Prince* John Zylinski and that his family dates back "thousands of years".

It is this sense of aristocratic lineage that has inspired his ambitious building project at No 46 Park View Road, Ealing. Five years ago, this Polish prince acquired the 1920s suburban house which stood on the site on Hanger Hill and since then has enlarged and transformed it into a palace – a palace apparently inspired by his grandmother's country house at Gozdowo in Poland, which was destroyed during the Second World War.

"When I was six years old," he explains, "I promised my grandmother I would rebuild her house that she lost to the Nazis. It has taken me many years to keep that promise, but it's better late than never. I have converted an existing house that was made of red brick. It now has grand columns which, in my opinion, bring grace to it. I will live there and continue the family tradition as well as keep the memory of my grandmother alive."

What the prince and his Polish builders have created off Park View Road is, however, not exactly a replica of the lost Gozdowo house – not that we know what that looked like anyway. In fact, it is not a replica of anything. I have no ideological objection to modern Classical architecture, or to the revival of any other historical language, whether Gothic, Byzantine or Modern. What matters is whether it is any good (or not) in its own terms. And this is, er, not any good at all.

Prince Zylinski is proud to be a member of the Traditional Architecture Group, but he might have done better to have employed an architect who understands tradition. The Palais Zylinski is a sort of caricature of the Petit Trianon, but as a Classical design it is just illiterate: the Corinthian columns are far too thin; the architrave is missing from the entablature; the proportions are terrible; and the profusion of garden centre statuary on the parapet merely emphasises the vulgarity of the conception. The over-gilded interiors might have been commissioned by the late Nikolai Ceausescu himself.

The "Prince" and his Palace

Prince Zylinski's neighbours are not very pleased but Ealing Borough Council does not seem at all concerned. When, last year, Zylinski put in another planning application, to extend the garage, 40 neighbouring households objected. Even though the application was shown to be misleading, it went through. Being a prince with such an ancient title, it seems John Zylinski expects to get his own way. A few weeks ago, he submitted another application to enlarge the garage further – into a two-storey residential building which will stand right by the road. Owing to some oversight, neighbours were not sent the statutory notice about this, and the ever-obliging borough soon granted planning permission – even though a restrictive covenant precludes the building of a second residence on the site.

What are all these properties for? Zylinski claimed he was building "Nowy Gozdowo" for himself but with it "doubling up on occasion as a bespoke cultural venue". Yet the Prince and his Princess seem not to have moved in. "I can always sell it to a Russian billionaire," he told the *Daily Telegraph*. But perhaps Russian billionaires, assuming they want to live in Ealing, have better taste.

MORE depressing news from suburban Liverpool. A year ago, as the city council decided to demolish another 3,000 decent houses while encouraging developers to build as much as they liked in the city centre, one street was reprieved from John Prescott's insane Pathfinder scheme for mass demolition.

Ruth Kelly, who took over responsibility for housing and planning from Prescott, decided that the Victorian houses in Prescot (no relation) Drive overlooking Newsham Park, laid out in the 1860s, should not be bulldozed. The council had owned these handsome and interesting buildings – which stand in a conservation area – for some years and had allowed many to become derelict and subject to arson attacks. Ms Kelly ordered the council to dispose of the properties so they could be renovated.

However, Liverpool council has failed to implement the order and has consistently refused to accept any offers to purchase. Nor has it looked after the houses or kept them secure. The inevitable result, to the dismay and terror of occupants of other houses in the street, is that they have been subject to more arson attacks. Last month, three "went on fire" (as they say in Glasgow) in one night. A council member of Merseyside Civic Society commented: "The council has been turning down written offers from reputable refurbishment specialists, effectively delaying a decision while Rome burns… This is demolition by stealth. I can only surmise the council has another agenda."

So much for Liverpool being European City of Culture 2008!

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Incredible, the art scene – you can sell any old rubbish for millions!
How dare they! They'll get a piece of my mind!
Er...
FRANCIS BACON'S RUBBISH GOES FOR £1m AT AUCTION
RECOVERED FROM SKIP BY BUILDER

I-SPY *Gibraltar*

Submitted by Mrs Hilary J. Ward. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

IF YOU were listing the institutions essential to musical life in this country, the Cheltenham Festival would surely be near the top. For more than sixty years it has promoted British music, nurtured British composers, commissioned new works, and in every sense set standards – an example of what corporate-speak tritely calls "the pursuit of excellence".

Which is why we should be concerned by signs that all is not well. First Michael Berkeley stood down as artistic director complaining it was impossible to run so significant a programme with so little money. Then, in his successor Martyn Brabbins's first season, much of the planned programme had to be scrapped at the last minute for lack of funds. Now, after problems between the festival and the town council that ran it, there has been a messy parting of the ways that leaves the festival a free-floating private venture with all the vulnerability that entails.

Already the council has been taking its revenge, threatening to sell off the historic Pump Room which has been a central venue for festival concerts. The council claims the Pump Room is economically unviable and could be turned into a hotel or leisure centre; an absurd proposal for such an architecturally and socially important building, but nonetheless put forward with apparent seriousness.

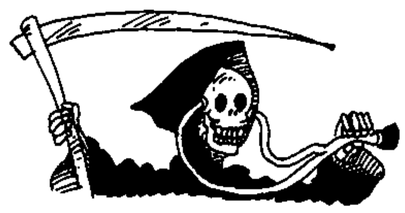
Meanwhile, as the 2007 programme was launched it was casually announced that this would be Martyn Brabbins's last year as AD. The announcement drew splutters over the finger buffet, partly because Brabbins has only been in the job for two years, and partly because none of the festival's home team – sponsors, board members etc – had been forewarned.

A letter of apology was dispatched to all concerned pleading the pressures of the town council divorce as the reason why this small item had been overlooked. The chief executive added ominously that there were at present no plans to replace Brabbins, begging the question of how future festivals will happen at all.

It seems the pressures have also caused a number of minor but telling errors in the 2007 programme – photos showing the wrong members of ensembles, the wrong conductor, misinformation in the blurbs that introduce the concert repertoire, and so on.

It's a crying shame for several reasons: the programme itself is good, Brabbins's artistic leadership has been impressive, if brief, and Cheltenham matters. But the very fact that Cheltenham matters is why someone needs to take a grip on things. As they stand, this particular pursuit of excellence looks rather lost.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'



Medicineballs

MTAS rides again...

EVER wanted to be a doctor? Couldn't get the grades? Well now you don't have to. Just log on to the Medical Training Application Service (MTAS) website and you can access the personal details of hundreds of junior doctors. Why do medicine the hard way when you can become a doctor overnight with identity fraud?

This laughable security lapse in the online job application software for doctors and medical students has now been fixed... but only by taking down the whole site. So, with just 13 weeks to go before 1 August, junior doctors can't get any details of where and when their interviews are. But Health Minister Lord "what a" Hunt was wheeled out to assure us that "top security advisers" from "expert external companies" were looking at the lapses as a matter of urgency (and great public cost).

Most disturbing was not the leaking of the sexual orientation and religion of named doctors (given the record of IT in the NHS, this was to be expected) but that such a spreadsheet ever existed. Such details should only ever be collected anonymously to ensure lack of discrimination, not attributed to named individuals in print when the only result can be to increase discrimination. So the Modernising Medical Careers (*sic*) programme may now face legal challenges for breeching confidentiality, as well as being incompetent and unfair (see *Eyes passim*).

Hunt tried to put the initial lapse down to a malicious leak, and then "teething problems". But when it emerged that junior doctors could easily hack into each other's job applications and change them if they so desired, it became apparent that the whole programme was unsafe. A suitably smug Richard Granger, head of the much-derided Connecting for Health programme, claimed that if he'd been in charge of MTAS, such a breach would not have occurred. Channel 4 then discovered that the personal details (including home address, phone and mobile numbers and email) of doctors attending a CfH conference were left up on his website for two weeks after the breach was reported and could still be obtained months later.

On a brighter note, heart surgeons have shown the benefits of publishing sensitive data. Public disclosure of death rates began in 2001, after the Kennedy report on the deaths of child heart patients in Bristol. The death rate for coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) patients after public disclosure was significantly lower than it had been before, falling from 2.4 percent to 1.8 percent with no evidence that higher risk patients were denied surgery. The difference here is that grassroots doctors are collecting data and sharing it with patients because they believe it to be the right thing to do. Whereas Connecting for Health, Modernising Medical Careers and much of the Blairite health reforms are ill-conceived, rushed, top-down disasters that are forced on the front line without consultation or agreement. They funnel billions away from patients into the pockets of private companies... and then don't work. Tony Blair may claim after 10 years that he's saved the NHS, but he won't be around on 1 August when those juniors who haven't given up are still scrabbling around for jobs, and patients are wondering if they'll ever see a doctor.

M.D.

"Say 'Aaaaaargh'!"

SIGNAL FAILURES

Chunnel vision

RESPONDING to public concerns over aircraft emissions, Eurostar has launched an initiative to reduce its carbon footprint and "help our travellers do the same". So why is it preparing to force travellers into cars, and possibly even planes, by slashing services from Ashford?

After the high-speed line from London to the Channel Tunnel opens in November, Ashford International (opened in 1996 at a cost of £80m and the environmental costs of construction) will have just three trains a day to Paris and none to Brussels. Instead trains will call at Ebbsfleet International, a sprawling new 9,000-space car park near Dartford. Eurostar is proud of the location – not on the domestic rail network but "less than 3 miles from junction 2 of the M25 [and] close to the Dartford Crossing".

Eurostar services will abandon Waterloo International (also built at great cost in the 1990s) for the new St Pancras terminal. Passengers from south of the Thames will lose their direct access to Eurostar through Britain's second busiest station, Waterloo. Instead of taking the train from their local station to Ashford or Waterloo, most will have to drive to Ebbsfleet or squeeze into Northern Line trains from Waterloo. Or they might drive to the continent or take the train to Gatwick and fly from there.

THE Chunnel was expected to cut lorry traffic through Kent by making trains more economic for many international deliveries: Chunnel freight trains were forecast to shift 6m to 8m tons a year.

In fact freight carried by train peaked at 3m tons in 1998 and has declined ever since. And while freight trains moved less in the first quarter of this year than in 2006, lorries on Eurotunnel's shuttles rose by 11 percent. It's obvious where Eurotunnel's main interest lies; its chairman, Jacques Gounon, said figures for the quarter were "very good".

Trucks emit up to 10 times more carbon than trains, but council officers in Kent say international lorry traffic through the county has more than trebled since before the Chunnel opened, congesting strategic and local roads. Their suggested solution is to enlarge the M20, A20, M2 and A2 – which could stimulate even more traffic.

Meanwhile the European Union is finalising yet another package of common rail standards which will dump extra bureaucracy and cost on local railways for paltry gain. Where "harmonisation" does matter is on international routes, but the EU has failed to ensure its environmental and transport principles override the apathy and self-interest which have throttled Chunnel freight trains.

One of the last companies to continue with those trains is now considering withdrawal because SNCF (French state rail) is suddenly upping charges for use of infrastructure near Calais from €5,000 to €13,000 per round trip in July. Anyone with the cheek to use non-SNCF locomotives and drivers in France – on what EU law says is open-access railway with equal treatment for all companies – will be charged €22,000. What will the EU do about that?

'Dr B Ching'

Letters

Private Eye

Bubble trouble

Sir,

Hi, I must comment on the cover picture and speech bubble on your latest issue.

All wrong, either keep the photo and have Mr Bliar saying "Oh look – it's my sense of shame" or keep the original bubble with him looking at coffins coming back from Iraq.

ANDREA HAMMOND,

Via email.

Sir,

With dozens being killed daily in Iraq, our troops still being shot at in Afghanistan not to mention the botched PFI deals and the enormous NHS deficit currently being made worse by the wonderful NPfIT, I think a magnifying glass will hardly be necessary to see Blair's legacy.

Regards,
OWEN RICKARDS,

Via email.

Jerry-built

Sir,

I thought it rather unkind of you to extract the urine from Bryan Fuhrerry. He made some very relevant points about the quality of Nazi architecture. I speak with practically first hand knowledge. My late father was a Russian Jew. Along with his brother he was a welcome guest at one of Mr Hitler's concentration camps. He often reminisced with me about the perfect symmetry of the wooden huts they lived in. The beautifully arranged parallel sleeping bunks and the exquisite bathroom facilities. He thought the design of the superlative ovens was a piece de resistance only surpassed by the carefully arranged cemetery.

He was so sorry to leave and always remembered with great fondness the thoughtful design and layout which made his visit such a joy.

Regards,
RICHARD SIROT.

Walmer, Deal, Kent.

Car-crash humour

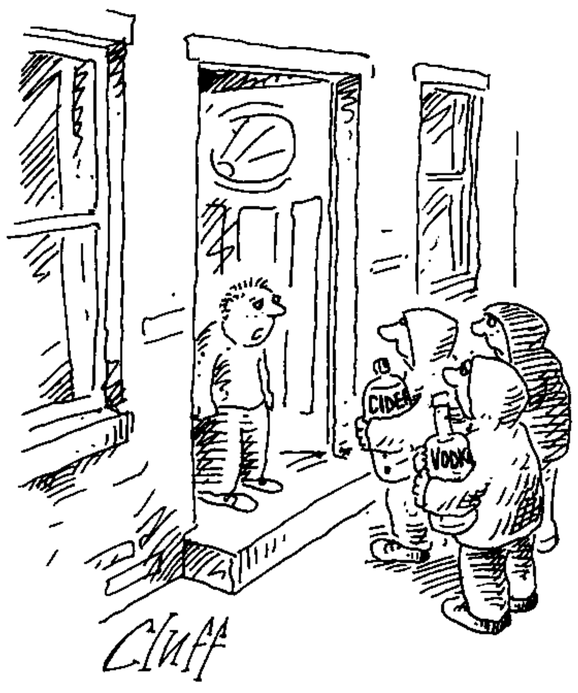
Sir,

I think that your joke about Princess Diana ("Tina") is sick and exceptionally bad taste.

Thank god you are not losing your touch. I shall not be cancelling my subscription after all.

ADRIAN GREEMAN,

Via email.



"I can't come out tonight... I'm having dinner and a small glass of wine with my parents"

Tommy rot

Sir,

How ironic! On the very day you publish my letter (Eye 1183) criticising Remote Controller, and his defence of the right to screen "The Mark of Cain", he fulminates in his latest column about the dangers of copycat massacres, following the widespread broadcasting of the gruesome footage of Cho Heung-Sui of Virginia Tech. Funny, isn't it, how editorial judgement is always right when it comes to the freedom to put squaddies lives in danger, but wrong in circumstances like the recent American tragedy.

As Kipling went on to say:-

"An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please:/An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool – you bet that Tommy sees!"

Never mind, when Tommy does see, and we are left with no Armed Forces to speak of, I'm sure we'll be able to rely on the likes of Remote Controller to fill the gaps.

JACK SMITH,

Lindal-in-Furness, Cumbria.

Lookalike

Yeltsin

Amis

Sir,

Now Boris Yeltsin's glass is half empty. Or is it Kingsley Amis?

Yours in drink,
OWEN MASSEY,

Oxford.

One top shop

Sir,

Re: Eye 1182, cartoon p11 (hilarious dystopian imaginings, in which Tesco itself is the place to buy 'Say No To Tesco' t-shirts).

Tesco has beaten your cartoonists to it. Anyone interested in reading Andrew Simms' new crusading book, 'Tescopoly: How One Shop Came Out on Top and Why it Matters' – a bitter fulmination on the influence of our Great (market) Leader and its pernicious, spirit-crushing, village-crushing, choice-crushing rise to power – will find they can buy a copy from Tesco's online store.

Never one to miss an opportunity to undercut competitors, they even offer a special 20% off the cover price as an added inducement. Even when the world tries to beat them down, it seems, Very Little Helps.

STEVE BANJO,

London.

Fowler language

Sir,

Roger Charlton's assertion (Eye 1183) that a work can only have one protagonist may be true of Greek dramas, but it is generally accepted that more modern works may have a number of them. John Dryden, for example, referred to protagonists in 1671. The assumption that only the singular usage is acceptable seems to come from Henry Fowler's Modern English Usage (1926) in which the use of the plural was deemed "absurd".

However, the OED seems quite happy with this "absurd" usage, referencing George Bernard Shaw as another user of the word protagonists.

Yours,
ALEX MASTERS,

Via email.

Not sick of ants

Sir,

Insurge-ants! Hahahahahahahahahahahaha-hahahahahahahaha! Brilliant!

Regards,
MICHAEL NADASDY,

Via email.

Sir,

I would like to sympathise with Frank De Pellette's predicament on finding a potentially tasteless joke in a satirical magazine (Eye 1183 letters page). I recently bought a copy of 'Tractors Weekly', only to find it full of stuff about tractors. I was gutted.

Yours giggling,
PHILIP HARRIS,

Via email.

Great Scott

Sir,

Regarding schnorrers. When the late Ronnie Scott was still alive, there was a sign at the pay desk of his club – "Members £5, Guests £10" and another which read "Schnorrers £250". Unfortunately this sign disappeared a few years ago, perhaps taken by one of the so-called "Schnorrers".

MIKE 'Have You Remembered To Forget Your Wallet?' GOODMAN,

Isleworth.

S. Kevin

Fish off the pee-er

Sir,

In Eye 1181, the description of a "Fish 'n' Flush" (in Funny Old World) reminds me that, before the War, the gentlemen's convenience at the south end of the Charing Cross Road actually possessed one of these devices, over the urinals. The goldfish was some 6 inches long (15.2 cm) and survived happily as the water level rose and fell. I never saw a marine biologist there, unless he was incognito. The attendant fed the fish.

RONALD BROWN,

Chichester.

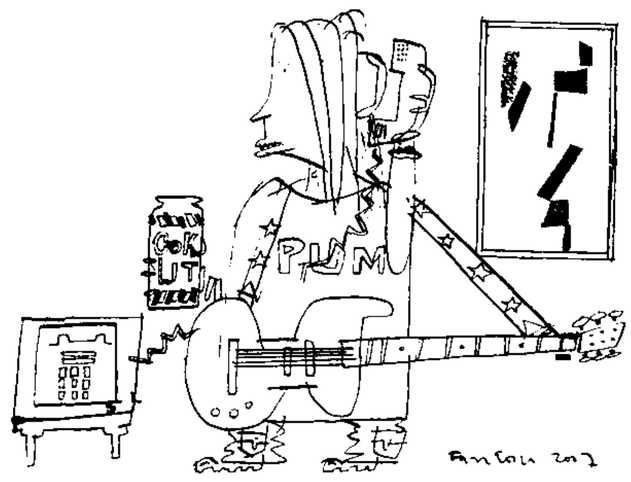
"They're so iconic and so famous and so beautiful and everything about them is fascinating to people. I adore them! I think they're wonderful, wonderful people."

EVA LONGORIA on the Beckhams, *Heat* magazine

Submitted by Sue Backhouse

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Scenes You Seldom See



"This is David and Janet's son, Tom, speaking. They have both gone out, but I will be delighted to take a message and give it to them as soon as they come back"

Bankruptcy annulled

Sir,

I see that Slicker claims that I failed to mention a bankruptcy back in 1985 in a prospectus for a company of which I am a director.

The facts are that I paid my debts in full, the bankruptcy was annulled and in law can be regarded as if it had never happened.

Yours faithfully,
ROY C. TUCKER,

Maidstone, Kent.

Steel away

Sir,

I believe that Mr Tim Hall (Letters, Eye No. 1183) is being far too harsh on what he calls Piloti's "rabid loathing and detestation of Norman Foster and Richard Rogers". I may be stretching out on a limb here, but Piloti's column has always expressed contempt for the fact that these architects (constantly reinventing themselves after thirty-plus years) are the figureheads for a culture of glass and steel which occupies land at the expense of practical, low-maintenance buildings which have stood for a hundred years.

For example, in Eye 1182 Piloti decried the plan to knock down not one but two perfectly good properties (one of historical interest, one of architectural interest) to erect a Norman Foster & Associates design. Hurrah for him. Mr Hall speaks of "rabid fanaticism" in such overt criticism. Why not? Every day a part of our architectural heritage is being obliterated or deformed in a manner which makes it unrecognisable. Then they are replaced by something which on the whole is less practical and more expensive.

Yours,
SIMON HARLEY,

High Seaton, Cumbria.

Well clad

Sir,

I'm sure Piloti (Eye 1183) would agree that it's perfectly possible for even the best building materials to be used inappropriately and there exist many examples on notorious structures throughout the ages.

Nonetheless, glass can certainly be included among the very best, as many examples among the finest buildings since mediaeval times can attest, where this material was taken to the absolute limits of its potential to achieve the desired effect.

Certainly, there are also far too many later buildings where glass and metal facades have been used which are mere pale shadows of some of the finest 20th century buildings using this technique.

Norman Foster, in particular, has never been guilty of this, as his record of innovative glass clad buildings over several decades is testament.

GORDON PETHERBRIDGE,

Via email.

Divine assistants

Sir,

Rev. Alan R. Kennedy writes in issue 1183 that he has no objection to the provision of restaurants in cathedrals, citing his awareness of the Christian ministry of hospitality. One can't help but wonder that, if this is the case, surely they should be free? This week's letters page has, in fact, left me feeling generally downcast and empty. Apparently, I am a philistine for not appreciating Patti Smith's use of metaphor in an article I had previously believed to be pretentious, self-serving twaddle. Worse, I'd mistakenly found the insurge-ant joke funny. What a misguided young fool I am. I'd cancel my subscription, but can't even be bothered to finish my

Yours,
EATON BISHOP,

London.

P.S. Perhaps in your archives you have a picture of a distinguished gentleman exercising traditional Christian hospitality and selflessly giving members of the younger generation a helping hand?

"I don't know about you, but I've a good feeling about tonight"

LUVVIES

"After the divorce my great fear was: I've never had to do anything for myself. But last week I took the train from London to Cardiff on my own. I even went to the snack car and had some awful coffee. I was so proud of myself."

JERRY HALL,
***Observer* magazine**

Submitted by Flora Watkins.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

SOLUTIONS

"Ikea: Dining Solutions for every family" – *tables*

"Reid Lifting: Innovative, lightweight, portable Lifting Solutions" – *cranes*

"Redtray delivers market leading blended learning solutions" – *training*

"Groundcare Solutions Courier Services" – *lost luggage return, Gatwick Airport*

"DB System 360°: garments which give you a 360 degree solution. Anywhere. Anytime." – *clothes*

"Alpaca Solutions" – *breeders of Alpacas*

All submitted by readers

Lubbe's labours lost

Sir,

1) Hitler never stated at any time that he set fire to the Reichstag. He always blamed the Communists for it. And, indeed, in 1962, Fritz Tobias proved, in his book 'Der Reichstagsbrand', that the culprit was a Dutch anarcho-Communist epileptic called Marinus van der Lubbe.

2) The 1936 Olympics were awarded to Berlin before Hitler became Chancellor.

3) Re Craig Brown's Tolkien parody: The Central Line service to Ongar ended in 1994, when Brian MaWhinney was Minister of Transport. The service now terminates at Epping.

Yours pedantically,
TOM CARTER,

Somerton, Somerset.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

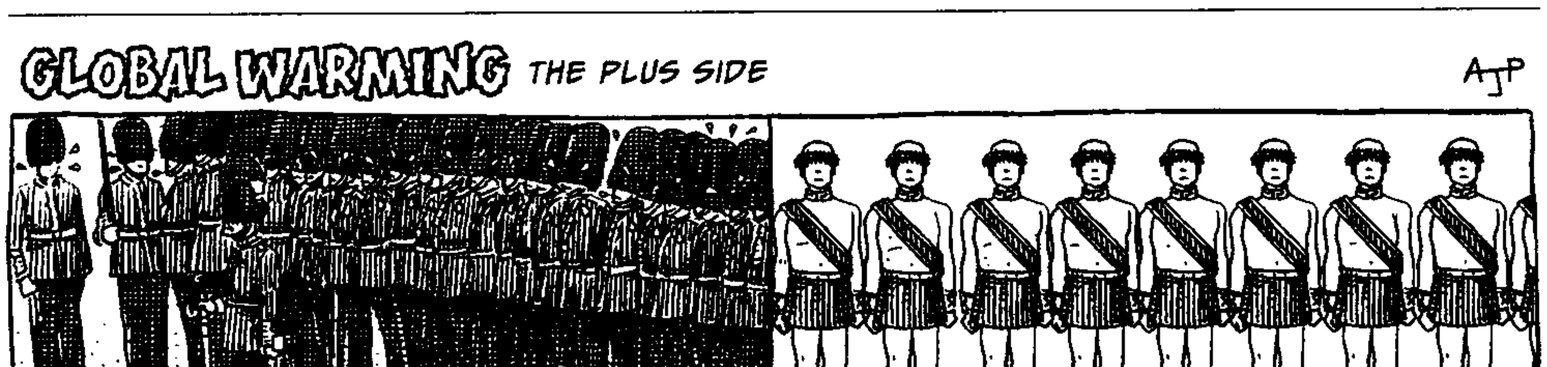
"Barbados, an island completely surrounded by water..."
Commentator, Sky Sports 1
(Len Horridge)

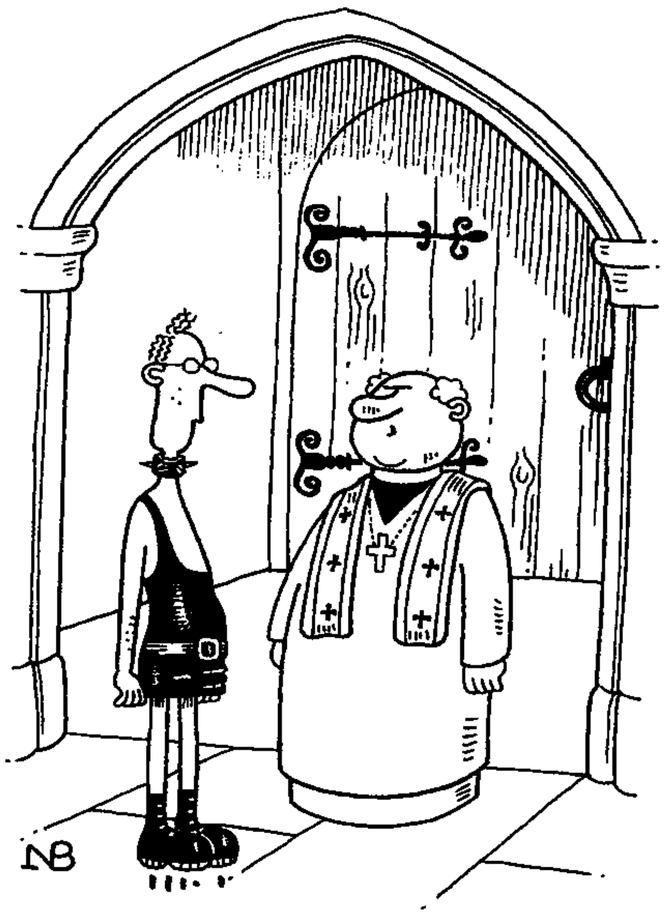
"He'll be haunted by that, not for the rest of his life, but until the day he dies."
ALEX SALMOND, Politics Show
(Paul Lloyd)

"I think he made the wrong mistake."
STEVE STONE, Radio 5 Live
(Maxie Deverell)

"If the red wasn't where it was, he couldn't have played that shot."
WILLIE THORNE, BBC
(P.M. Knott)

"Andre Nel will not want to get up Sean Tait's end, not with that finger."
Commentator, Sky Sports
(Seamus Robinson)





"Sexual orientation is one thing, Entwhistle – sexual lifestyle is another"

Warped

Sir,

I cannot believe I'm actually writing this, but here goes...

Phil Evans's letter (Eye 1183) is only partly correct. First, speeds over warp factor 10 were common in the original series, before the warp scale was adjusted in Star Trek: TNG. Second, even then, other technologies (such as transwarp or quantum slipstreams) were used to travel at speeds greater than those allowed by traditional warp engines. Third, the warp scale isn't strictly speaking logarithmic but is instead exponential, so that warp factor 2 is more than twice as quick as warp factor 1 (10 times faster using the adjusted scale) and warp 4 being around 10 times faster than warp 2.

Things get a little complicated as you move past warp 9 though, because then the scale does actually become logarithmic in that it asymptotically converges on (gets infinitely close to but never reaches) warp factor 10.

Excuse me while I go and find a life.

Regards,
MICHAEL PATEREK,

Via email.

Sir,

I must correct Phil Evans' correction of Dafydd ap Thomas (Phasers to stun!, Letters, Eye 1183). He states that travel at Warp 10 is impossible, yet, in the Emmy Award-winning Star Trek Voyager episode "Threshold", Lieutenant Tom Paris and Captain Kathryn Janeway travel at Warp 10, thereby "evolving" into salamanders.

Yours,
CHRIS MARTIN,

Quondam Lieutenant Commander, Oxford University Star Trek Society.

Sir,

It is indeed impossible to "pass through every point in the universe simultaneously". However, Douglas Adams had already solved this problem by equating impossible to infinitely improbable. His Heart of Gold ship neatly sidestepped the energy issue by calculating its way around space.

DAVID CRYSTAL,

Via email.

WHITTON BARBERS
High Class Hairdressing
At Low Prices!
Specialist Barber
Ladies available by appointment
Advertisement, Hounslow Guardian

Letter from **Colombo**

from Our Own Correspondent

AN undeclared civil war is raging across Sri Lanka, threatening to escalate significantly and tear apart the country as an unmoved world looks on apathetically.

Officially, our separatist Tamil Tigers and the military are still "observing" the 2002 Norway-brokered ceasefire. Every now and then, there are feeble, mostly token, attempts at reconciliation. But since the election two years ago of our distinctly robust president Mahinda Rajapakse, it is a ceasefire that has been marked by pitched ground and artillery battles, recurring air strikes, landmine explosions and ambushes by both sides. Thousands have died.

The fighting has also rendered many more – mostly Tamils in eastern Sri Lanka – homeless. Nor have the images of war greatly helped our tourism industry, which has struggled for a generation against the backdrop of a conflict in which more than 65,000 people have died. Since the early 1980s, the Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam (LTTE), claiming discrimination at the hands of the 90 percent majority Sinahalese community, have been battling for an independent homeland in the north and east of the island.

Threatening our already fragile security situation, the Tamil Tigers have recently raised the ante by carrying out, for the first time, three air strikes over the past month: two of them in and around an air force base and fuel depot in the capital, Colombo, killing at least three airmen.

Using modified Czech Zlin Z143 light aircraft – assembled after being secreted into the country via the LTTE's well-established smuggling network, the Tigers were sending the message that they were neither down nor out following a series of military setbacks in the east around Trincomalee port. Three international airlines immediately either cancelled or cut back their flights to Colombo.

Our security boys fear we are now looking ahead to trouble on three fronts: conventional war in the north; guerrilla operations in the east; and terror strikes in Colombo. For the Tigers are nothing if not formidable. With their new six-plane air force, the Vaan Puligal, they now have a weapon that can panic the government and foreign investors alike. Already they were perhaps unique as a rebel group that possessed not only ground forces and guerrillas, but a navy as well. Some years back, the world was amazed by the unearthing of a LTTE mini-submarine factory in the Thai resort of Phuket, home to a large Tamil population. With the help of two South American states, the Tigers created a submersible "strike" vessel capable of being transported in a mother ship to attack targets like Colombo harbour.

Until the daily surge of suicide attacks in Iraq overtook them, the Black Tigers held the record in their grim specialty with 390 hits and a success rate of 80 percent that included a president, prime minister, defence minister and the country's chief of army staff among numerous others. The LTTE, in fact, patented the human explosive belt.

Described as "paradise on earth" and "pearl of the Indian Ocean", Sri Lanka, a country of just 19m people, is South Asia's most militarised nation. It has 8,000 military personnel for each one million citizens. Even Pakistan, ruled by military administrations for most of its 58 years since independence, has only half that number. Military spending is 4.1 percent of our gross domestic product, more than anywhere else in the region, and more than many other countries at war.

While such violence and distortions do little for our impoverished masses, there is at least a silver lining. Our arms dealing and defence contracting friends in Israel, China, Pakistan and Russia – to name just a few who supply both sides – are making a bomb.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"I was sitting in my apartment when I heard a woman screaming for help from the room above," James Van Iveren told police in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, "and after a few moments I realised she was being raped. I don't have a telephone, so I couldn't call the police, but something had to be done. So I decided to take the matter into my own hands, grabbed my cavalry sword, and bounded up the stairs to the apartment above. I intended to knock politely on the door while holding the sword behind my back, but in the heat of the moment I kicked the door off its hinges instead, confronted the man inside, and waved my sword around while demanding 'where is she?' Now that I've ascertained the full facts, of

course I feel stupid. But I was only being a responsible citizen, and really this was nothing but an innocent mistake."

The unnamed neighbour gave a somewhat different version of events. "I was sitting watching a pornographic movie on my DVD player when I heard this almighty crash. I was only wearing panties, so had to adjust my clothing before I went into the hallway, where I saw that my door had been broken down. And before I knew what was happening, a madman was holding a sword to my throat and yelling 'Where is she, you bastard? What have you done with her?' over and over again. I thought he was going to kill me, and it took a long time to convince him there was nobody else here."

After the neighbour had played part of the DVD to police, Van Iveren was charged with criminal trespass, criminal damage, and disorderly conduct. *(Winnipeg Free Press, 22/2/07. Spotter: Peter Hughes)*

– o –

"Is it sacrilegious to keep churchgoers warm in their pews by using heat from cremated bodies?" Allan Vest of the National Crematorium Trade Association asked government ministers in Copenhagen. "We don't think so. Forty thousand Danes are cremated each year, and the temperature of the gas-fired ovens reaches a thousand degrees Centigrade. So instead of just letting all that energy escape into the atmosphere, why not use it in a positive way? We could easily pump the heat to nearby church buildings, and – who knows? – perhaps we could even start selling it, thereby reducing the city's heating bill."

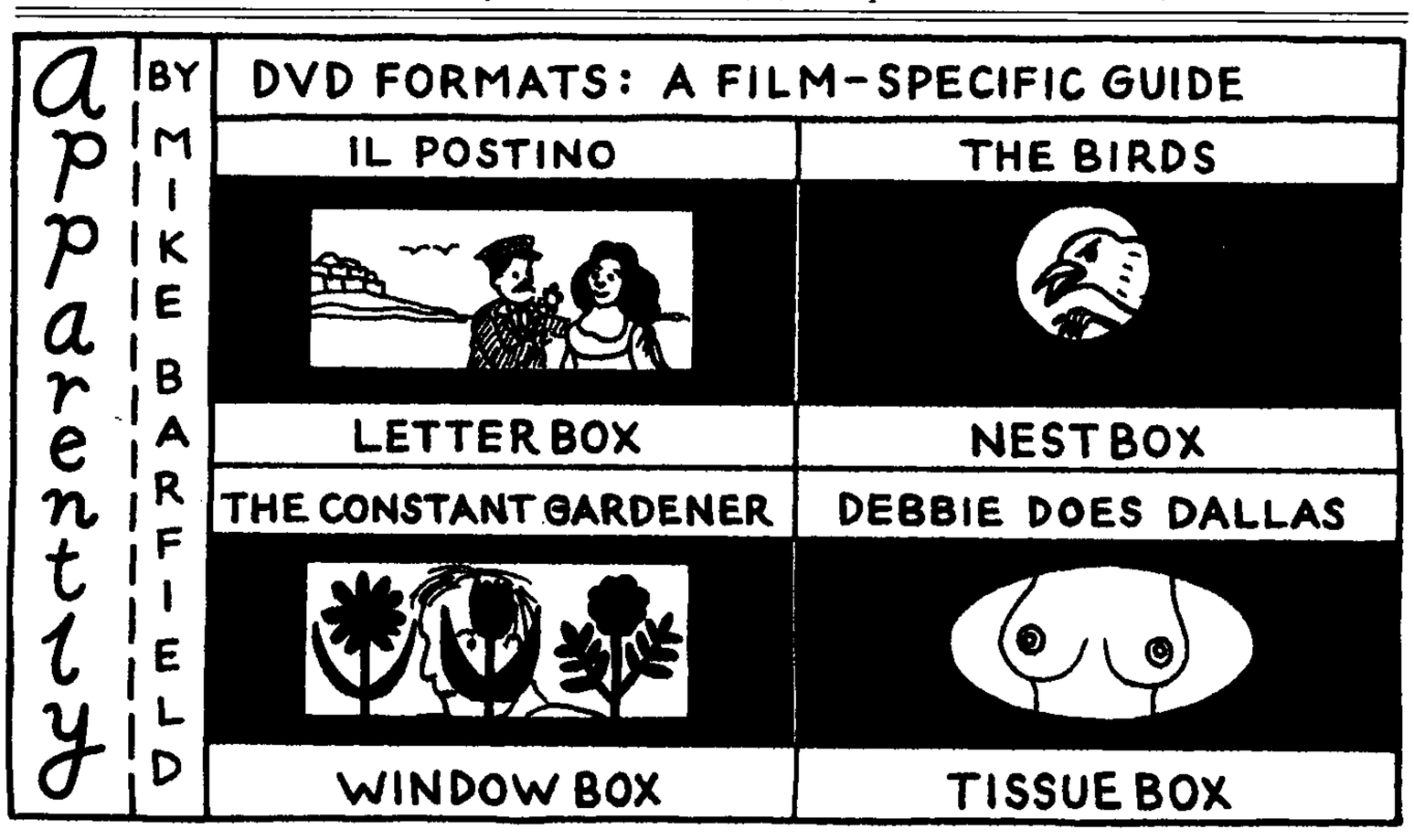
Ole Hartling of the National Council of Ethics was sympathetic to the request. "We do not feel that re-using the heat from cremated bodies involves any major ethical problems. We have noted the positive environmental aspects, and do not believe that the corpses are being defiled in any way, because they are already incinerated by the time the heat is used."

Bertel Haarder, Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs declared himself "quite pleased with the council's decision", and promised to relax the rules governing crematoria. (Copenhagen Post, 21/11/06. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)

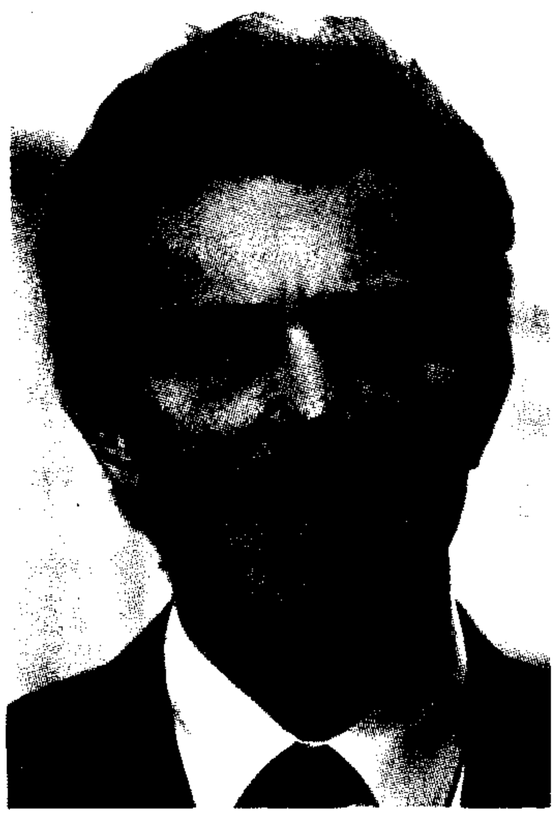
– o –

"When airport security officials find an Iraqi national with wires protruding from his rectum, they're right to be suspicious," Larry Fetters of the Transportation Security Administration told reporters at Los Angeles International Airport. "Exercising an abundance of caution, they arrested Fadhel al-Maliki during passenger screening, called in the FBI and the police bomb squad, and took him away for further examination. Inside his rectum, they found electrical wiring wrapped around a magnet, which was also wrapped in a napkin with a piece of chewing gum, and what I can only describe as some kind of round polished stone. We were naturally concerned.

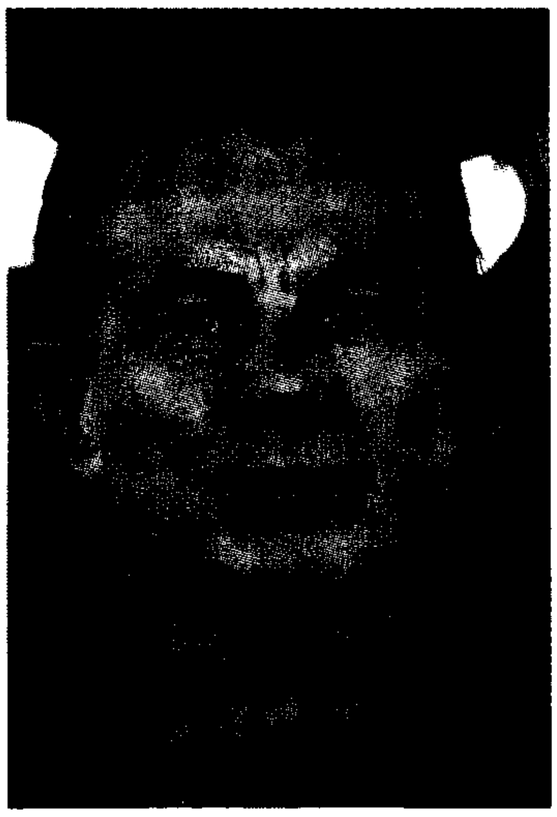
"Mr al-Maliki's behaviour seemed bizarre, but he eventually told us that the items in his body cavity were therapeutic, and were intended to combat stress. No explosives were found, but by the time we had decided that he posed no threat to security, his flight had already left, with his luggage on board. He is currently being held by immigration officials for mental evaluation, and until we finish the investigation, I believe that we're about as confused as you are." *(New Zealand Herald, 7/3/07. Spotter: Mal Function)*



THEN AND NOW



"I'm going to put an end to sleaze and self-interest"



"I'm going to make a lot of money using my contacts"

BLAIR'S 'GANG OF FOUR' TO SORT OUT THE FUTURE

by Our Political Staff **A. Pocalypse**

TONY BLAIR last night announced his new team who will be responsible for coordinating his efforts to solve the problems of Africa, the Middle East and the rest of the world.

The Blair team has been hand-picked to ensure that Tony's plans for global peace and prosperity will be implemented at the highest level.

Horsemen Behaving Badly

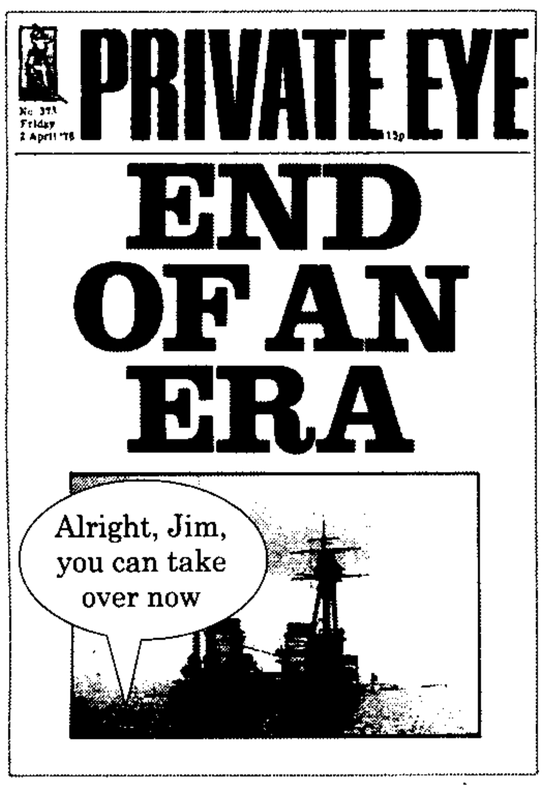
There is no lack of experience in the four advisers who have worked together in the past and have already co-operated with Mr Blair on previous occasions during his tenure at Number 10 Downing Street.

So who are the Gang of Four?

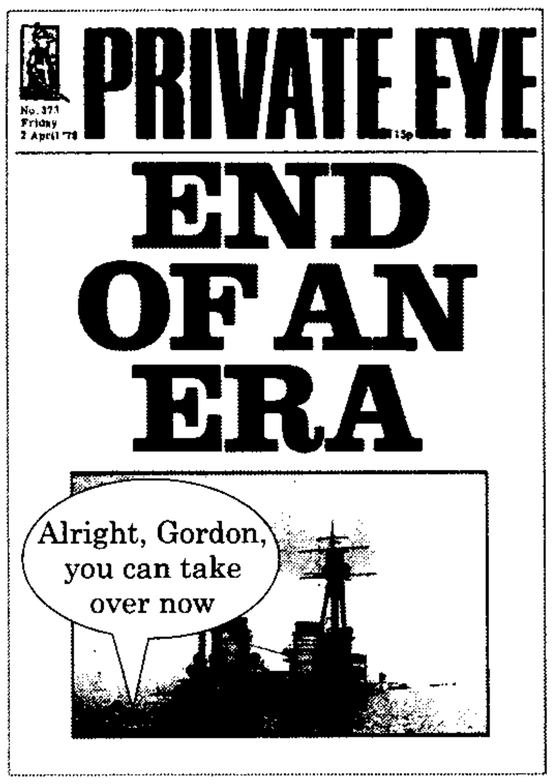
- **War** – seasoned campaigner responsible for numerous high-profile conflicts over the last two million years.
- **Famine** – African and Asian specialist with long history of impressive mortality rates.
- **Plague** – from the Black Death to Bird Flu, Mr Plague is an effective behind-the-scenes operator who can always be relied upon to make things happen.
- **Death** – the key player in the Blair team who *(cont. p. 94)*

Great Jokes Revisited

1976



2007



Local Election Special – 2am Edition

YES! IT'S MELTDOWN!

by Our Political Staff **Hugh Nose-Nothing**

MELTDOWN! That's the word we wrote down first before the results came in and that's the word we're sticking to as votes round the country show that in fact it wasn't really a meltdown at all.

But it certainly describes what's happening in the newsroom as all our forecasts fail to materialise and we begin to look a bit silly.

Wipe out! Landslide! Drubbing! Freefall! Yes, all these words have had to be replaced with something less dramatic as the British public showed exactly what they thought of pundits like us by creating a complex and rather boring voting pattern which didn't prove anything in particular except *(cont. p. 94)*

Those local election results in full

Middle England, South

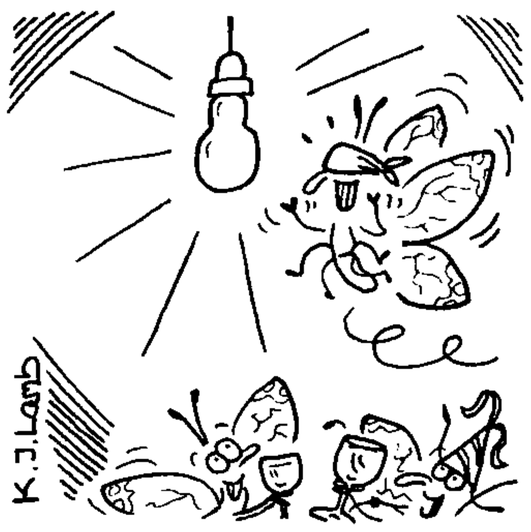
Tristram Jolly-Goodbloke (OE), *Conservative,* 2704
Ron Himmler *BNP*, 1506
Gavin Windfarm, *Green*, 107
Jenny Organic-Sandal, *Lib Dem*, 32
Ted Busdriver, *Labour*, 0
Conservative gain

Cwm Dancing, Rhonda

Jones the Winner, *Plaid Cymru,* 2704
Jones the Loser, *Labour,* 1506
Jones the Lib Dem, *Lib Dem*, 107
Jones the Holiday Cottage on Fire, *Conservative*, 0
No change

Auchtermuchty, North

Glen Fiddich, *SNP,* 3742
Glen Morangie, *Lib Dem,* 4
Glen Elton, *Labour,* 3
Johnny Walker, *Conservative,* 0
Spoilt Ballots, 277,428
Carrier Pigeon votes expected next week (weather permitting)
SNP gain



"Cold... warm... getting warmer... hot... really, really hot... oh"

New Miracle Face Cream from Boots

What do you think Tony should do now?

- Go to the Middle East?
- Go to Africa?
- Go to America?
- Go to Prison?

Phone or text now on 08988 9374721

All profits go to the Blair Foundation

TV Highlights

Poirot BBC2 **9.00pm**

NEW special where the famous Belgian detective investigates the mystery of why they cast 12-stone David Suchet as 25-stone Robert Maxwell.

Cast in full

Hercule Poirot.....Robert Maxwell
Colonel Hastings.....Max Hastings
Agatha Christie.....Inspector Morse

Play I-Spy the MI5 Way

Agent One: *(Looking at photo of dodgy Islamist carrying bomb)* I spy with my little eye something beginning with T.
Agent Two: Terrorist?
Agent One: No Tea!
Agent Two: Excellent.
Agent One: Sugar?
Agent Two: I told you not to call me that in the office.

(Tea lady puts photo back in file)

1997 ST ALBION PARISH NEWS 2007

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hello! (Or perhaps it really **is** *Goodbye!* this time!)

And as the autumn leaves turn to gold and the nights draw in and the days get shorter, we think, sadly, of time passing.

And, you know, the one thing I've always said, in the ten years that I've had the privilege of serving you, is "Don't look forward, look backward". Goodness me, I bet some of you are sick to death of hearing me say that – but it doesn't mean it's any less true.

Do you remember my famous chorus that I composed all those years ago and that we've sung at every Evensong since?

"Look back, look back,
You'll get the knack,
Look back, look back,
Things won't seem so black."

Before I look back at some of the miracles that we have achieved together (thanks to me!) over the past decade, let's first look a little further back shall we, at what life here in St Albion's was like all those years ago.

Just imagine my thoughts on that far-off day in May 1997, when I first entered the vicarage with my guitar on my back and the crowds cheering themselves hoarse in the street outside, as they waved their palm leaves and shouted "Hosanna" from the sheets that Mr Campbell and Mr Mandelson had so thoughtfully handed round!

What a day that was! A day that will live in all our memories for ever!

But, my dear parishioners, you won't believe the mess I found in the vicarage that momentous day!

Piles of unanswered mail and unpaid bills! The carpets worn and threadbare! Half-eaten breakfast cereals spilled all over the kitchen floor. Rats gnawing at the remains of a box filled with pieces of cheese that had turned green with mildew.

What a smell! And the garden was no better. Decapitated gnomes all over the flowerbed, and a solitary pair of grey underpants flapping on the line.

I can remember Cherie's words as if it was yesterday, "This is going to need a lot

of clearing up, Tony, and thank heaven you're the man to do it!"

And, you know, what was true of the vicarage was true of the whole parish!

Everywhere you looked, it was a disaster. Nothing worked. Everyone was unhappy. There were piles of rubbish outside every house, waiting for binmen who never came!

I could go on. But, hey, we all know how bad things were at that time!

That's why the last decade has been such a golden age for all of us here in St Albion's.

As one of the great prophets of another age once said, "Brethren, ye have never had it so good" *(Gospel according to SuperMark, 19.59)*.

Just look out of your windows and tell me if things have not got better in every possible way!

- The St Albion's prison full to bursting!
- St Albion's Primary School – biggest class sizes ever!
- St Albion's Kwikfit Beacon Academy of Excellence – all obesity records broken!
- St Albion's Cottage Hospital – can now guarantee MRSA for every patient!
- St Albion's police station – closed because there's no longer any crime to solve!

And all this is not to forget perhaps our greatest achievement of all – the Millennium Tent, which still stands proudly on the edge of the church car park, and which has now been preserved for generations to come as St Albion's premier entertainment centre, where you can see such fabulous acts as the Barbra Streisand Tribute Band Experience or Mr Campbell reading extracts from his famous "dodgy diaries". (Alastair tells me that there still a few hundred thousand tickets available!)

And, hey, I'm hardly scratching the surface here! We talk about counting your blessings, but there are so many that it is easy to lose count, isn't it?

How about these? A Tesco on every street corner! A post office in every W.H. Smith! A Polish builder in every home!

And that's not the half of it! I don't want to bore you by going on about my legacy (from the Greek *legasos*, "having no leg to stand on") because I know I've preached enough sermons on that subject to last a lifetime!

And, in any case, the one thing we should never do in this life is to waste time looking back rather than forwards!

Goodness me, how many times have I told you that!

Remember that chorus I wrote right at the start of our time together?

Don't look back,
Don't look back,
That's completely
The wrong tack.

Forwards let us look today,
Yes, it is the only way,
Don't get hung up on the past,
It was never meant to last.

Yours ever, Tony

The vicar discusses his future with other members of the St Albion's jobless

"Sic Transit Gloria Toni"

As seen by by local artist Mr de la Nougerede

JOHN BROWNE
A Clarification

■ The vicar wishes it to be known that, following his sad retirement, he has in no way been offered a part-time post at our local petrol station by the former manager, Mr John Browne. He further wishes it to be known that although from time to time they had dinner together, he and Mr Browne were in no way friends and indeed have never met. It is true that Mr Browne kindly gave my former secretary Anji Hunter a job as promotions manager, handing out bars of chocolate and plastic champagne flutes. But there was never any mention of me getting a post as the service station's resident outreach counsellor for a modest honorarium of £500,000 a year. Anyone who suggests to the contrary can expect to hear from my lawyer, Ms Cherie Booth QC, who is absolutely livid at this unexpected shortfall in the mortgage requirements for our retirement home in Ratrun Square. T.B.

An Apology from Mr Mandelson

Dear Friends,

As your former churchwarden, I think I may owe you an apology for various things I have said in the past about our greatly-respected treasurer, Mr Brown.

I am second to no one in my admiration for Gordon and all the wonderful work he has done for the parish.

I know occasionally in the past I may have "let off steam" a little about Gordon, but when I described him as a "raging psychopath", it was only a bit of fun at the expense of one of my closest friends!

And when I said that I could think of no one less fitted to step into the vicar's shoes than "Gormless Gordon", it was just my little tease at a man whom I have always thought would be even better fitted for the job than Tony himself, who did, let's be honest, rather go off the rails in recent years, when I was no longer there to tell him what to do!

When I return from my oecumenical mission to Brussels in a year or two's time, I very much look forward to serving the parish in some capacity, no matter how senior! I hope Gordon will be quick to act appropriately!

P. Mandelson,
Rue des Matelots, Bruxelles.

Time for Prayer

As Cherie looks forward to the vicar's retirement we all join her in praying that the vicar may be blessed with a great deal of money. As she puts it, "Let U.S. Pay!!!"

WARNING: This poem may be adversely affected by late election results due to voting irregularities and an investigation by the Electoral Commission

Lines Written On The Breakup Of The Anglo-Scottish Union After 300 Historic Years

By William Rees-McGonagall

'Twas in the year two thousand and seven
That Scottish folk everywhere believed they were in heaven.
By voting in their millions for the SNP,
They believed that at last Caledonia had been set free.

For 'twas back in the reign of Bonnie Queen Anne
That all this sorry business first began.
When the proud Scots submitted to the Sassenach yoke,
Which I assure you was very far frae being a joke.

For three hundred years despite their bravery,
Yon puir Scots had to endure a life of slavery.
In misery they had to sweat and toil
While the English came in to plunder their oil.

And throughout all this long and dismal time
The wicked English committed against the Scots every kind of crime.
They even removed the historic Stone of Scone
And put it in a prominent place in London toon.

But then after nearly three centuries of shame,
The long-awaited day of reckoning came.
The English thought a devolved Parliament would be a solution,
But instead they sparked a Tartan revolution.

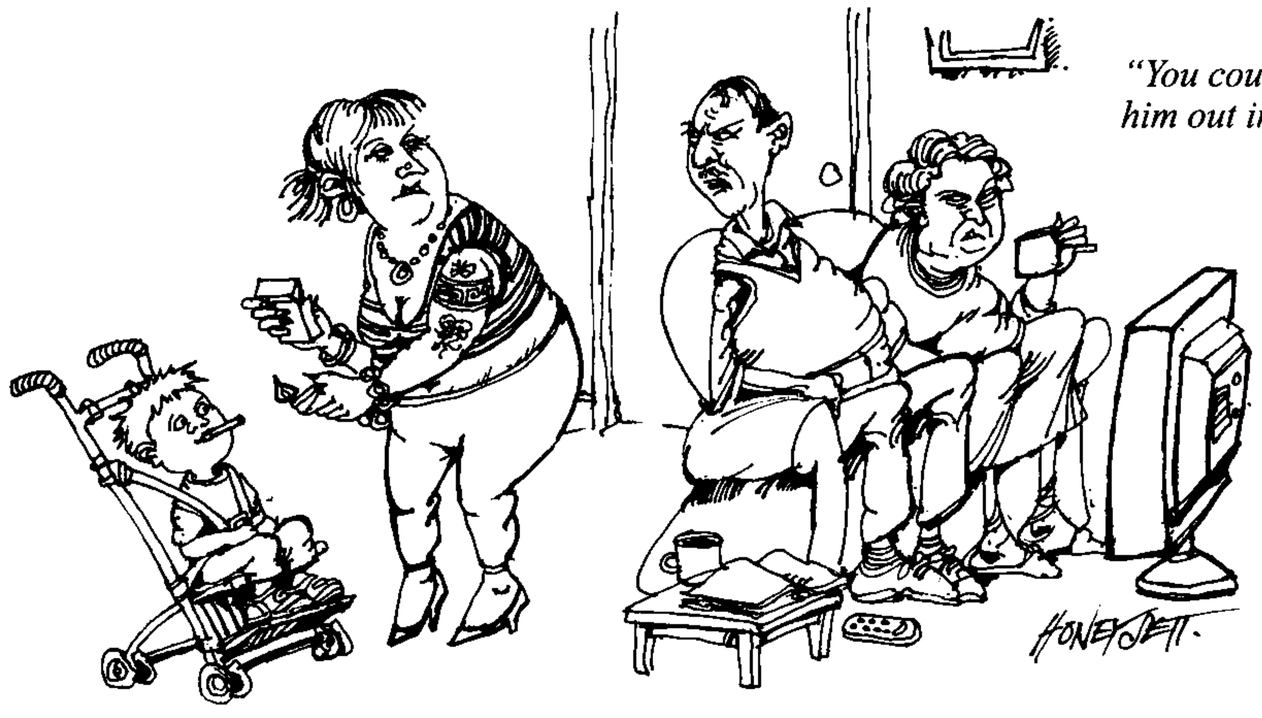
From Gretna Green to John O'Groats,
The Scottish nation cast its votes.
From the highlands to the lowlands, from far and wide,
They placed their crosses Alex Salmond's name beside.

But was this a vote for Scottish independence?,
Or more that they wished to pass on Mr Blair a death sentence?
Did they want to get their country back?
Or just punish Blair for invading Iraq?

Och aye, the Scots ended up parting from their neighbour,
Because they could no longer bring themselves to vote Labour,
So Mr Salmond became Braveheart's heir
Just because everyone in Scotland hated Blair.

© W. Rees-McGonagall.

● Do you agree with the above poem? Or do you think there were other reasons for the swing to the Scottish National Party? Or maybe you're Welsh and you don't care? Or perhaps you're angry that the above poem isn't about the elections for the Welsh Assembly? Why don't you join the debate by logging on to www.fillupelectionissueoverquietbankholidayweekend.com?



"You could at least put him out in the garden"

Downfall of a Titan

By our City Staff Lunchtime O'Pec

One of the great figures of British industry has been brought low in scenes reminiscent of a Greek tragedy.

They called him a colossus, a prince of capitalists, one of the most brilliant businessmen the world has ever known.

Lord Browne of Madabouttheboy

The secret of his genius lay in his almost uncanny ability to sell large quantities of petrol at a very high price.

This unique skill won him the respect and admiration of the entire civilised world.

Said one awe-struck insider, "John's strategy was worthy of Einstein. He had worked out that there were a lot of people in the world who needed petrol. And he could sell it to them for a large profit."

And yet this mighty Napoleon of the forecourt, this Potentate of Petroleum, perhaps the finest mind ever to spend 40 years sitting behind a desk in BP, has been brought low by a drama worthy of the pen of Sophocles himself.

Who could have foreseen that this Sultan of the Service Stations, this Goliath of Gasoline, this Rajah of Rent Boys *(surely some mistake? Ed.)* *(cont. p94)*

What They Said

CEDRIC SPART

Yet again the forces of homophobic reaction have ganged up to crucify an innocent business tycoon whose only crime was that he was gay... er... apart from the fact that his real crime was that he represented Big Oil which is the most destructive single force on the entire planet... er... in fact I have nothing but contempt for Lord Browne who betrayed the entire gay community by living a total lie by attempting to conceal his sexual orientation when as a world-famous business leader he could have been an icon of gayness along side Sir ian McKellen, Sir Elton John and myself... er...

Jonathan Aitken

The fall of a great figure in public life is always a tragic spectacle. As someone who himself was brought low by hubris, I deeply sympathise with myself *(surely 'Lord Browne'? Ed)* and can only hope that Lord Browne faces this ordeal with the same kind of courage and humility that others such as myself have shown.

BROWNE AND CHEVALIER SHOCK

BROWN REPUTATION IN TATTERS

by Our Scotland Correspondent **Maurice Chevalier**

GORDON Brown's reputation with voters was in tatters last night after he was forced to admit that he had lied in the papers about his long-term relationship with a glamorous younger man, Tony Blair.

"I now admit that when I described Tony in that interview in the *Sun* as a "great Prime Minister" I was lying through my teeth" an ashamed Gordon Brown told reporters on Friday. "Tony had blackmailed me into lying by threatening to hang on as Prime Minister for another year if I didn't say it".

It's thought that after these revelations Gordon Brown will be forced to stand down as Chancellor and take on the demeaning job of being Prime Minister.

Exclusive to all papers

Business comment

ONE can only feel nothing but sympathy for former BP boss Lord Browne.

Clearly his decision to tell a "little white lie" to a court about how he met rent boy Jeff Chevalier was motivated simply by the fact that he was a very private man.

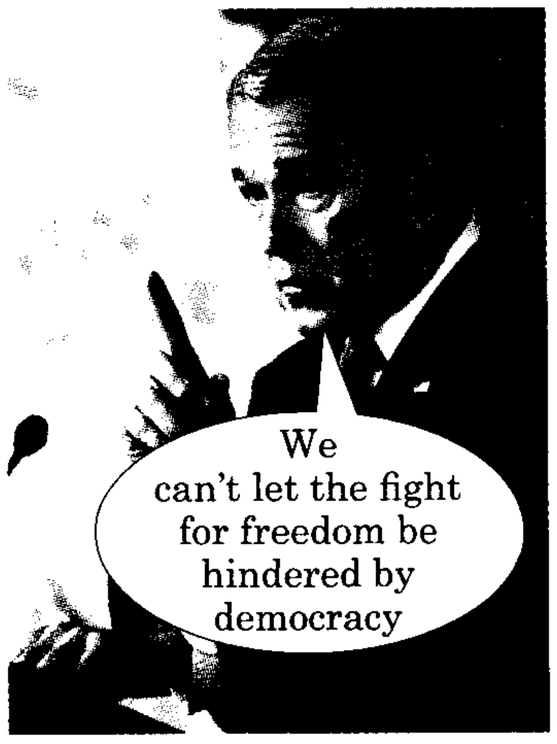
Surely the fact that he's rich and powerful, regularly earning bonuses of millions of pounds a year, means that he shouldn't have to be constrained by laws which lesser people have to obey.

This case cannot be allowed to end a centuries long tradition in British law of "one rule for the rich and one law for the poor".

Because if it does, and people in the city feel they can't tell lies without the fear of prosecution by lesser mortals hanging over them, then we will undoubtedly see an exodus of the best and brightest from the Square Mile and *(cont. p. 94)*

Early Monopoly

BUSH VETOES CONGRESS IRAQ BILL



SHOULD HARRY GO TO BOUJIS?

by Our Military Staff **Major Hangover**

TOP ARMY BRASS are increasingly worried about the deployment of His Royal Highness Prince Harry in the high-risk zone at Boujis.

"Conditions in the nightclub are pretty hairy," said one fellow officer. "There's a lot of incoming vodka and Harry is a natural target for blonde bombshells."

He continued, "It's not really fair on all the other chaps if Harry is in there because we can't really protect him if we've trying to do our job properly – i.e. get really hammered ourselves."

A veteran of Boujis, Guy Pelly-Silly, 22, disagreed. "Harry is well prepared for night-ops in Kensington," he said. "He's done the training and experienced hundreds of live rounds of champagne and absinthe slammers. It would be a real waste if he was not allowed to see service at Boujis – which is very good actually if you bung Otto a tenner behind the bar!"

On Other Pages

● Should Princess Beatrice be sent to Boujis instead? Or shouldn't women be on the drinking front line?

Join the debate at fillournewspaper.co.uk or alternatively don't bother and just get "wankered" instead at boujis.co.uk

I.T. SYSTEM DOESN'T CRASH

A GOVERNMENT department was forced to apologise last night after its new I.T. system didn't crash.

"We simply cannot understand what went right here: we followed all the usual procedures used by the Registry Office, the NHS and the DSS; the project was hopelessly mismanaged from the start, millions over budget and delivered ten years late," said the civil servant in charge.

"And yet when we switched it on, instead of everyone's personal records being erased or put on public view, the new system started working perfectly.

"We're pretty confident that this was just a one-off, and that by Monday we'll be in the same mess as every other government department."

News In Brief

BROWN REJECTS EARLY POLL

GORDON BROWN has told ITV that he will reject calls for an early election after he becomes Prime Minister.

"I didn't hear people calling for a general election the moment John Major took over in 1990," he said.

"And if it's good enough for that uncharismatic politician leading his party to eventual electorial humiliation, it's good enough for this one too," *(cont. p. 94)*

REID SUPPORTS BROWN

JOHN REID has announced that he will not be contesting the Labour Leadership, following Tony Blair's resignation.

"The last person the voters will want as their next leader after Blair is a dour, unpopular Scot whose judgement has been widely questioned in the papers over the past few months," said John *(cont. p. 94)*

BROWN REFUSES TO NAME DATE

GORDON BROWN has angered many in his party by refusing in a speech last night to name the date when he will stand down as Prime Minister.

"If we're to have any stable and orderly transition of power post-Gordon, we must know now in the weeks before he starts being Prime Minister, the exact time and date on which he will be leaving office," said a senior backbench *(cont. p. 94)*

OUTRAGE AT RUBBISH REMOVAL FREQUENCY

by Our Refuse Staff **Osama Wheelie bin Laden**

AS RESIDENTS of Britain went to the polls yesterday there were increasingly angry protests around the country at the schedule of local rubbish removal.

Said one furious householder, "Why are we only allowed to get rid of the rubbish once every four years? It's a disgrace."

Said another, "No wonder the country's in such a mess. We should have dumped all this trash ages ago. Why is it still here?"

Ordure! Ordure!

Pressure groups complain that unwanted garbage has been piling up in local council chambers rotting slowly and then starting to fester. As a result, they claim, rats have been running amok in local government leaving 'a huge stink everywhere'.

Green Has-Bins

However there was no sign that more regular rubbish removal was on the way. Said a Local Government spokesman, "People have got to learn to recycle. Don't just throw us out because we're rubbish, use us again! That way we can save our jobs if not the planet."

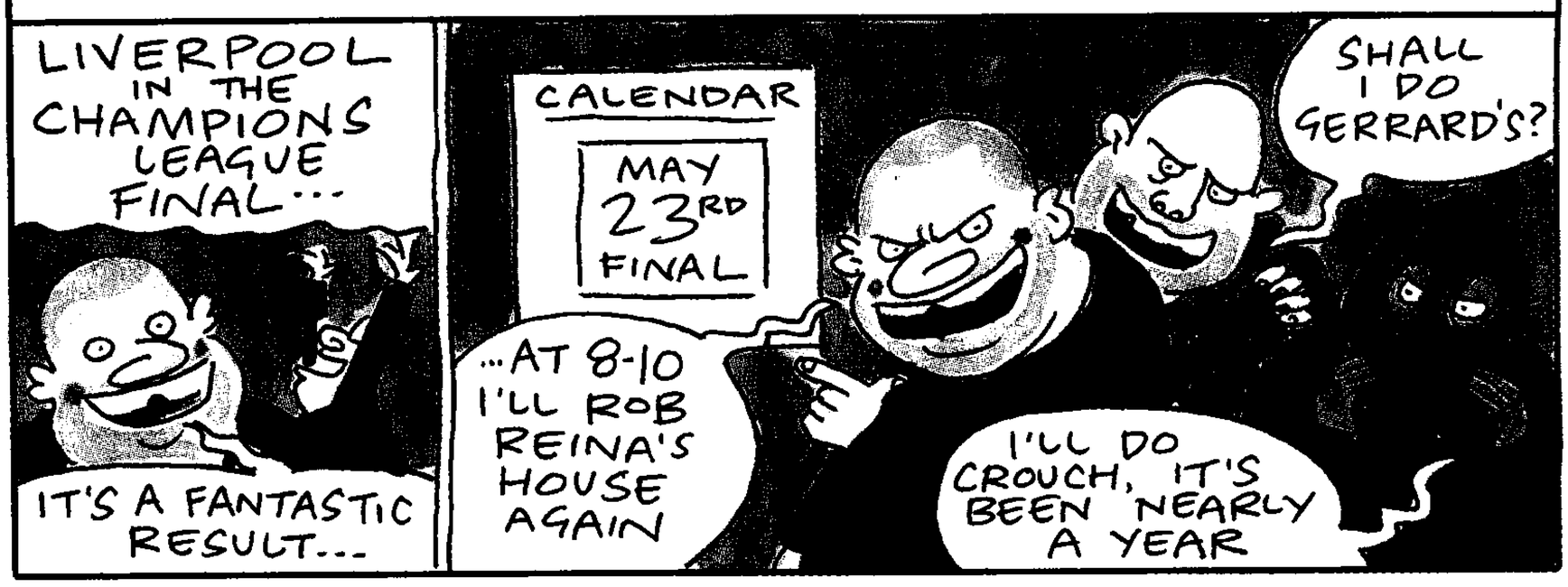
Peter Mandelson admits New Labour indulged in too much spin

On other pages

- ☐ Bear admits to defecation in woods
- ☐ Pope admits to "Catholic tendencies"

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOLEY


LIVERPOOL IN THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL...
IT'S A FANTASTIC RESULT...
CALENDAR
MAY 23RD FINAL
...AT 8-10 I'LL ROB REINA'S HOUSE AGAIN
SHALL I DO GERRARD'S?
I'LL DO CROUCH, IT'S BEEN NEARLY A YEAR

The Book of Ehud

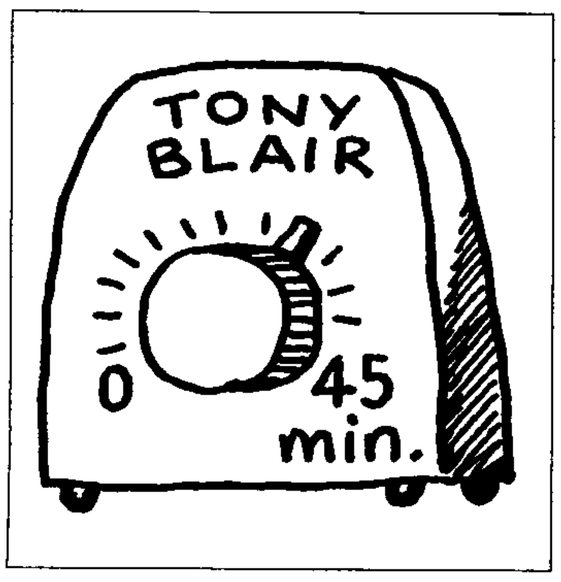
Chapter 94:

1. And lo, it came to pass that the Children of Israel looked upon what had been wrought by their leader Ehud and saw that it was not good.
2. For had not Ehud told them that they should go into the land of Leb-anon to smite the Hez-bollites?
3. And the Hez-bollites should be like unto the corn as it falleth beneath the scythe, as it is cut down under the midday sun.
4. Or like even unto the cockroach that is crushed beneath the flip-flop of the sunseekers of Eilat.
5. But what had happeneth? The warriors of Israel went into the land of the Cedars, even unto Tyre and Sidon, and then had to cometh home again.
6. And the Hez-bollites laughed them to scorn, saying the Children of Israel have gone soft, even as the doughnut that is dunked in the coffee in the cafes of Tel Aviv.
7. And the Children of Israel waxed wroth and murmured amongst themselves, saying this Ehud is no bloody good, for he knoweth not how to do the smiting.
8. And Ehud saith unto them, "I tell you, I am a smiter not a quitter."
9. But they laughed him to scorn, saying among themselves, "We need a real man for the job."
10. So they proposeth a woman and her name was Liv-ni, that was the daughter of Eit-an Livni, he who hath blown up the hotel that is named after King David in the holy city of Jerusalem.
11. And they said that, when it cometh to the smiting, surely this woman comes from royal lineage and the smiting must be in the genes?
12. And Ehud wept bitterly, for he suspected that his time was come.

● Are you Jewish and offended by this piece? Or do you think *Private Eye* is too cowardly to parody the Koran?
Join the debate on www.mideastlooneys.com

TONY BLAIR SOUVENIRS

No. 1



Egg Timer

DI-LY EXPRESS

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER AND PROUD OF IT — FRIDAY MAY 11, 2007

DIANA CORONER ABDUCTED BY ALIENS

By Our Legal Staff **Mohamed Fayed**

BARONESS Butler-Sloss, the second coroner to "resign" from presiding over the inquest into the murder by the Royal Family of the late Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed was, in fact, snatched by extra-terrestrials working for British Intelligence under the command of the Duke of Edinburgh, I can reveal.

"We wanted to stop the truth coming out in the inquest," said one of the aliens. "Fuggin' Prince Philip told us to kidnap the fuggin' judge to shut her fuggin' up."

The alien spaceship is believed to take the form of a white Fiat Uno which drew up alongside Baroness Butler-Sloss and *(cont. p. 94)*

THE BLAIR YEARS

by Alastair Campbell

For Eye readers only – an exclusive extract from the former spin-doctor's explosive diaries.

The last entry

4 March 2007

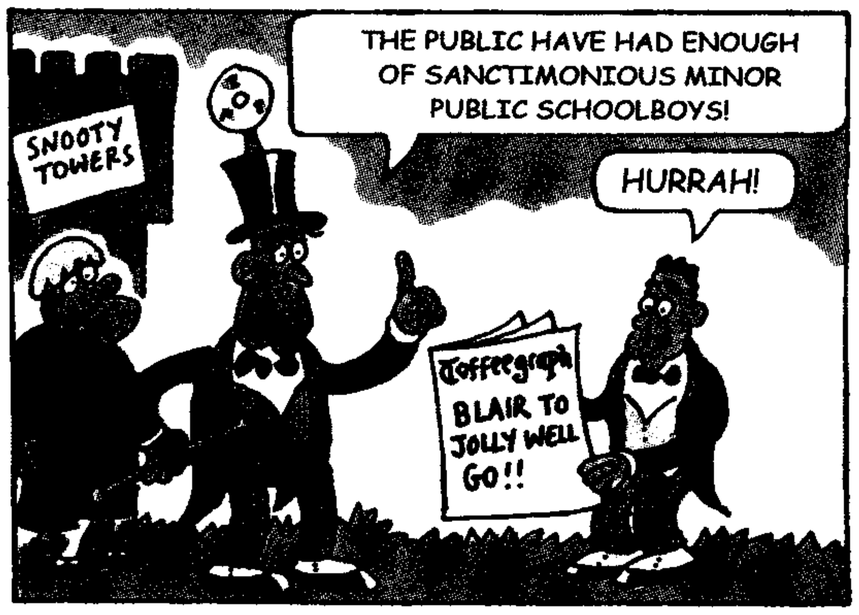
Got up.

Convinced Tony to delay new rules preventing the publication of politically-damaging memoirs by former civil servants, promised in the wake of Sir Christopher Meyer's memoirs in February, until after my book was on the shelves.

Went to bed.

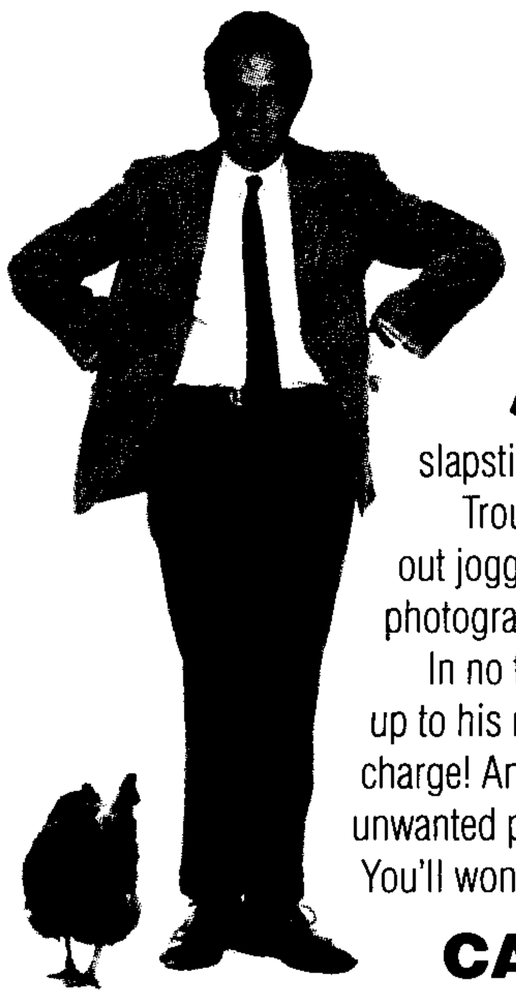
(The End)

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS



IT'S TIME FOR SANCTIMONIOUS MAJOR PUBLIC SCHOOLBOYS!
ALL IT TAKES IS ONE POSH AND WE'RE THERE!
TIME TO TOAST OIKY GOVE ON THE FIRE, CHAPS!!

Advertisement



MR. BAKED BEAN

JOIN the hilarious antics of Britain's top movie funnyman Hugh Grant in a new slapstick comedy.

Trouble starts when Mr Baked Bean goes out jogging and is then snapped by a photographer!

In no time, Mr Baked Bean has got himself up to his neck in trouble and is on an assault charge! And got himself a whole load more unwanted publicity! You'll laugh! You'll cry! You'll wonder if he's gone mad!

CAST IN FULL

Mr Baked Bean..... Colin Firth

Hugh Grant..... Rowan Atkinson

Liz Hurley..... Jemima Khan

Heinz Baked Beans..... Tesco's Own Brand Value Bean-Style Beans

"I'm afraid we've got another complaint about our new plastic surgeon"

PRAVDEYE

11 May 2007 — Three roubles

BORIS
A NATION MOURNS

by Our Man In London

STATESMAN or clown? That was the question on the lips of every Englishman today, as tributes poured in to one of the true giants of modern politics.

To many he was the symbol of a new era – a breath of fresh air after the grim austerity of the Thatcher and Major years.

But to others, Boris was a buffoon, an embarrassment to his country.

Perestroika Worsthorne

A boozy clown, with an eye for the ladies, he was continually making appalling gaffes, such as his legendary insult to the people of Chechnya *(surely Liverpool? Ed)*.

Yesterday Boris lay in state in Parliament Square where he had fallen off his bike after a heavy lunch at the Garrick Club.

Respectful tourists filed past him as they headed to the National Portrait Gallery to see pictures of Kate Moss in her underwear.

●Would you like to see pictures of Kate Moss in her underwear? Join the debate at www.desperateeditors.sadnewsmen.co.uk

CRAZY SCENES AS DEMENTED FANS FIGHT OVER KATE MOSS ITEMS

by Our High Street Staff **Philip Greed**

FASHION frenzy erupted yesterday as hundreds of middle-aged men stampeded through central London trying to get Kate Moss items for their newspapers.

Said one screaming editor, Paul Dacre, "I saw the *Evening Standard* had a little Kate Moss number so I had to have one as well." Said another, Robert Thompson, 49, "I don't care what I get, so long as it's got Kate's name in it!" A third, Alan Rubbisher, 51, was the most excited of all, "I don't care if its pants, I just want it!" he said.

Watching teenagers were, however, baffled by this 'Moss Hysteria'. Said one 16-year-old schoolgirl, "Why aren't they in their offices doing their jobs? They shouldn't be allowed in the streets competing to waste their money on

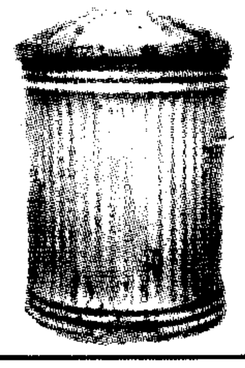
so-called exclusive items from the Kate Moss Collection."

Kate's Line (geddit?)

Nevertheless, the lucky editors were thrilled with their purchases. Said *Telegraph* editor Will Lewis, 37, "This Kate Moss stuff makes us look young, trendy and happening."

NEW OLD SONGS

♫ *Oh, my old man's a dustman.*
He wears a dustman's cap.
He comes round once a fortnight
Frankly the service's crap... ♪

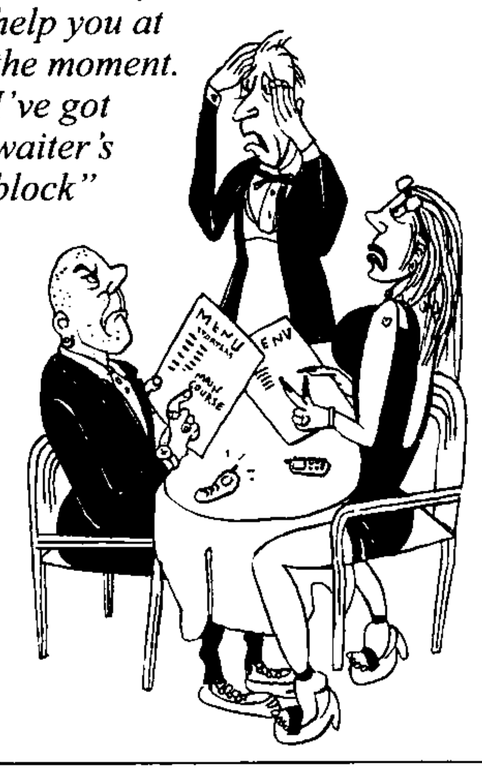


BBC SHOCK

THE BBC has announced today radical new plans to show TV programmes on television sets.

"While these television sets will never replace seeing your favourite shows streamed on the internet, beamed directly to your mobile phone, or projected onto the side of your house," said the BBC's newly-appointed Creative Multi-Vision Platform Director of Post-Media Interface Synergy Jeff Haircut, "we do believe that broadcasting on television sets still plays a small role in delivering to a small niche market of viewers who want to watch television." *(Reuters)*

"I'm sorry I can't help you at the moment. I've got waiter's block"



DIARY

TINA BROWN ON DIANE, PRINCESS OF WALES

Elizabeth 2, hot-headed, can-do, silver-haired Queen of All England, power-thumped her Louis Quatorze escritoire – valued at $4million – with her bare fist for the eighth time that rain-soaked morning.

"Jeez!" screamed the moody monarch, whose prestige London base, Buckingham Palace, had recently been valued by realtors at a chunky $900million without curtains, but who was still suffering from extreme status rage, "Can't a lady get some service around this f***ing place?"

Elizabeth 2 had learnt passive aggression way back in her $1000-dollar antique cradle. The eldest daughter of top-flight hangdog royal King Edward VIII and his All-American lock-jawed lovebird Mrs Duchess of Windsor, she knew all about how to get her own way. Hell, why should she fly economy? Wasn't that her picture on every stamp? She stole a glance down at a sheet of 1000 fresh-minted stamps, just to be sure, and sighed "Aced 'em!" with heartfelt relief.

Now an old lady, but still sexy to her expertly-manicured fingertips, she would regularly ride round London Town in her power-vehicle of choice, a flash, fuck-you, million-dollar carriage pulled by six sweaty power-crazed, big-buttocked horses on the make. And whenever she waved at her weary, coal-faced subjects in their bowler hats, those subjects knew to wave back – or face the white-heat of one of the tiaraed monarch's volcanic temper-tantrums.

"Jeez!" The toffee-nosed cut-glass screech went up like a siren in the *Inferno* by top Italian author Dante Alighieri. "Call herself a Princess? Where's the hell's Diane?"

At her jewel-encrusted feet, her favored corgi-dog, Buttons, continued to gnaw on a half-dead rabbit, trapped fresh that morning by suave, scheming mega-butler Paul Burrell.

They had called it the Wedding of the Century. But – hey! – that was five years ago, and a helluva lot had changed since that fateful day. To Princess Diane, sitting sultry on a settee in super-swanky Kensington Palace, it now all seemed more like a pile of doggy-do. Wooh, she couldn't get that crappy nightmare day out of her head, covered by hair recently shampooed by world-class mega-hairdresser and dynamo-former-husband-of-pop-star-Lulu John Frieda.

That long-ago morning, the Royal couple had power-marched up the aisle of top marital location Winchester Abbey, just a mile from world-famous Harrods department store. Unknown to the rest of the world, and revealed here for the very first time in human history, Princess Diane had secretly employed the veil of the billowing hyper-expensive designer label wedding dress as a cover for a last-minute call on her mobile to glamorous soon-to-be-divorced multi-millionaire hot-dog heir Hiram Vernon Hiram Jr.

"Hey, babe – it's still not too late to change your mind!" Hiram had blurted as Diane arrived at the altar.

"Got to go now, huggy-bear! Byee!" whispered Diane, forgetting to switch off her mobile. 2863 miles away, on the other side of the Atlantic Sea, in his penthouse valued at $120 million, and with a deluxe bottle of vintage Cristal champagne chilling in his state-of-the-art frigidaire, the next words to echo in Hiram's ears were: "I do".

Hell, he thought – I'm too late to stop Diane. Hiram let out the crazed money-soaked sigh of a jilted multi-billionaire.

What Hiram didn't know that Spring morning, and not a single one of those lavishly-coiffured, super-techno-groomed, pumped-up 10,000 A-List guests packed into exclusive Winchester Abbey knew either, was that as the newly-crowned Diane, Princess of Wales strutted back down the aisle that Summer morning, beneath her multi-million dollar wedding train she was concealing a mega-big top super-secret.

I can now reveal that this secret came in the now-familiar shape of love-rat Captain James Hewitt, who sat crouched beneath the top wedding dress, pulled along on a specially-constructed designer skate-board, so's as not to arouse suspicion from the distinctive clump-clump-clump of a third set of footprints walking down the aisle. Regrettably, I am not at liberty to disclose the source of this red-hot revelation, but what I *can* now reveal is that I was informed of it by a highly-trained researcher who was told in confidence by a highly-regarded source, who heard it from a highly-placed member of the household, who is now dead, so equally regrettably you have no means of checking it.

"Beepity-beep! Beepity-beep!" Just as he was power-kissing his new bride on the specially-fortified exclusive power-balcony of Buckingham Palace that sultry Autumn afternoon, Prince Charles of Wales heard his mobile go off like a crack of mega-thunder.

Those underlings near the front of the billion-strong crowd gathered outside the Palace that day recall him power-barking, "Not now, Camilla, I'm shamming it for the cameras!" into his mobile, before carrying on with his super-snog of wretchedly tearful bulimic Princess Diane, her wedding dress spattered with thousands of melted chocolate-stains from the family-size Yorkie bar she had smuggled into the classy, cash-rich cathedral.

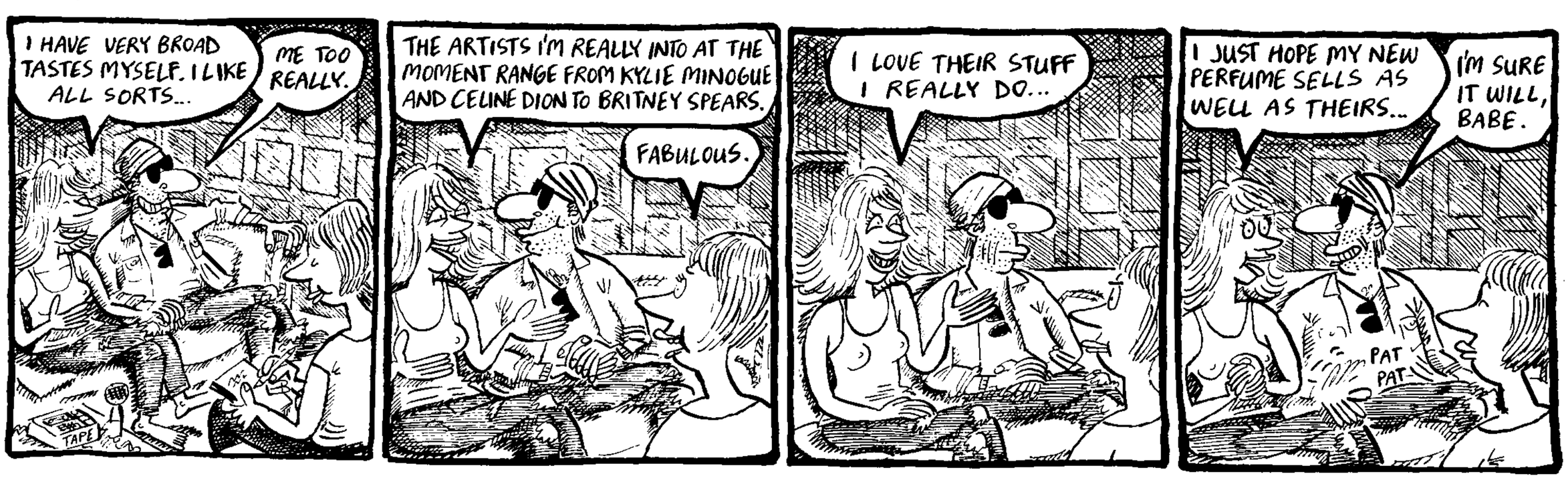
Behind them Helen Mirren-lookalike Elizabeth 2, pumped-up mega-rich silver-spoon sovereign, burned like a meteor with the bright, flashy glow of real power. Those regal, rancorous, rough-hewn eyes seared through her son and his unsuitable new wife like a $5000 kitchen knife from top store Macy's on New York's fashionable Madison Avenue through butter served in the in-crowd, book-six-months-in-advance brasserie of super-sassy boutique hotel McDitzys, Park Avenue.

Years later, when I spoke to her in the vestibule to the salon of her status-upping ancient Castle at Windsor, England, Elizabeth 2 kicked off her designer loafers, tipped up her jaunty newsboy cap, adjusted her svelte-assed loden knickers, spooned up another mouthful from her silver dish of fresh-hewn foie-gras, and shook a lavishly bejewelled fist at the ghost of Diane as it wafted through the chamber like an A-list apparition. "Jeez, Tina!" she told me, confidentially, "That scheming skinny bitch with the big eyes and the sharp hooter was a f***ing minx. I told Chas, I said, don't f***ing touch her, but would the guy listen? Would he? Would he? Like hell, he would! Jeez! I tell you, Tina, this screwed-up family is tanking – *tanking*!"

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


I HAVE VERY BROAD TASTES MYSELF. I LIKE ALL SORTS...
ME TOO REALLY.
TAPE
THE ARTISTS I'M REALLY INTO AT THE MOMENT RANGE FROM KYLIE MINOGUE AND CELINE DION TO BRITNEY SPEARS.
FABULOUS.
I LOVE THEIR STUFF I REALLY DO...
I JUST HOPE MY NEW PERFUME SELLS AS WELL AS THEIRS...
I'M SURE IT WILL, BABE.
PAT PAT

Literary Review

Brighton cock

Made in Brighton
Julie Burchill and
Daniel Raven
(Virgin, £14.99)

SO DESPERATE was Julie Burchill to puff this new rag-bag of hackwork (or "cold hard look at the changing face of Britain" as the blurb has it) that, when interviewed about it on Radio 4's *Today* programme, she had a bash at two sacred cows in the same breathless rant.

Good food (as promoted by Jamie Oliver-oil) is actually bad for you, she opined, and will probably just make you anorexic or bulimic. And the real reason chubby chavs who stuff their faces full of turkey twizzlers don't get all the best jobs is the "filthy class system of privilege", which promotes "dumb middle class prats" over their obviously more talented lower-class rivals.

The moderate, well-balanced tone of her remarks will no doubt win many converts to her peculiar brand of licensed jester contrarianism. But anyone actually tempted to buy the book is likely to be disappointed, not least because of the gap between its grandiose intentions (nothing less than a grand survey of the state of the nation, "using the seaside vista of Brighton as a focal point") and the idle fatuity of the result. Just like Brighton itself, appropriately enough.

Like many provincial towns, Brighton, as depicted in this hacked-together tribute, defines itself more by what it isn't than by what it is. It's not London, for one thing, though it charges London prices. It's not a city, though it wants to be, or at least its council wanted it to want to be, and after merging with its more genteel conjoined twin, Hove, saw its/their wish granted in 2001. Having spent £100,000 on attaining city status, the council then frittered away another £150,000 on a failed bid for European City of Culture status (the winner was Liverpool).

Nor is Brighton the saucy seaside resort it used to be, its famous West Pier having been allowed to crumble into the sea and its once seedy side streets now gentrified to appeal to the London commuters who push up its house prices without adding to the local workforce.

Nor, finally, is it particularly gay any more, the pink pound proving fickle, and the public bogs having all been closed to avoid offending the new population of "breeders" relocating from Nappy Valley. In short, there is nothing particularly special about it, and its attempts to draw attention (and funding) to itself, sedulously documented in this book, are as ridiculous as those of any other provincial town full of chainstores and carparks and puking chavs.

Despite its intentions, therefore, this book tells us less about modern Britain than it does about Brighton; and less about Brighton than it does about Julie Burchill and her current husband and co-writer, Daniel Raven, who happen to live there. Of course, if you are going to write a grand survey of the state of the nation, where better to start (and stop) than in your home town? Indeed, much of this book appears to have been written without even leaving the house: simply by collecting and quoting from local newspaper cuttings, often on the subject of Burchill herself. As a

survey, it is somewhat self-regarding; and indeed self-serving.

For example, much of a chapter devoted to championing the plight of the white working class (increasingly marginalised in Brighton's gentrification), is given over to Burchill's side of a story about how she sold her house in Hove, at a tidy profit of one million quid, to a property developer who planned to build 78 flats, much to the annoyance of her genteel neighbours. But it was okay really because 40 percent of the new flats were to go to "key workers" such as bin-men and nurses. She does not forget to mention that she also donated generously to a body called "Defend Council Housing".

In another chapter, entitled "Jordan: a very Brighton sex symbol", Burchill simply reproduces a sizeable cutting from the Brighton *Argus*, entitled "Burchill hails icon Jordan". This is contrasted with another cutting (pass us that glue, Danny boy) from the *Sunday Times*, in which another outspoken female columnist (India Knight) has the temerity to stand up for female modesty. Showing off your tits is all right, according to Burchill, if you're a glamour model, but pole dancing, further discussed in a chapter entitled "Putting the sex in Sussex", is the thin end of a nasty wedge of sexual exploitation. She looks forward to the day when the evil sex trade has been abolished as finally as the slave trade obviously hasn't, but "until then, mine's a top table at the front of the first all-nude Brighton lap-dancing club, champagne on ice and wad of fifties at the ready, sad slave to beauty that I am".

Poking fun at examples of Burchill's ludicrous writing style, which resembles the indignant ramblings of a viciously well-read teenage wallflower, would be like shooting fish in a well-stocked barrel. It's almost a relief to turn to one of the three rather more thoughtful if slightly nerdy chapters contributed by Raven: on architecture, on the attempt to create a buzzy local silicon valley, and on the "great and yet a bit crap" Brighton music scene. But even he is mildly obsessed by his own coolness, and like Burchill, with her constant references to drugs and hedonism (not to mention her rants on the radio), desperate to remind you that, middle-aged as they both are, they are young at heart and not just a pair of local history trainspotters. In the end, though, with all their cuttings and statistics, their timeline and even an index, that is how they come across: anoraks affecting to have attitude.

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Sunday at the Cross Bones
John Walsh
(Fourth Estate, £12.99)

"THINK, John!" The voice in my ear buzzed like one of the metaphors from my no-holds barred report from the world crab-racing championships at Skegness. *"Think!"*

I could handle it, I told myself. Naturally the job of chief associate editorial honcho at the *Indescribably-boring* had its tensions. After all, those in-depth interviews with Elle Macpherson, those poignant accounts of what happened when the fire alarm went off at the King's Lynn Literature Festival, didn't write themselves. And now here I was, just back from composing a wide-ranging think-piece about spring hemlines to a top-level meeting with my all-too-fragrant editor, Fruitella.

"It's no good, John. What your literary career needs is continuity. Say what you like about Sebastian and that other lot you're always showing off with on the radio, but at least they keep churning them out. It's eight years now since you wrote that book claiming you were Irish."

"The Falling Angels," I fondly confirmed. "Bejasus, yes, you adorable spalpeen. And really don't you think that pashmina might profitably drop just a *little* more off the shoulder?"

"It's called a cardigan, John. And it's another four years since the book where you pretended your life was entirely governed by what you saw at the cinema."

"Are You Talking To Me?" I eagerly glossed.

"That one. I hate to say this, John – it's something we only suggest to our authors when Waterstone's have stopped answering the phone – but have you ever thought of writing a novel?"

"Anyone can write a novel," I coyly quipped. "And tell me, is there a *Mr* Fruitella?"

"You're not anyone, John, that's the problem. But let's give it a go. History's in just now. Why not pick some historical figure people have just about heard of and write him up?"

"The Rector of Stiffkey," I breathed, "was a very interesting man. Torn between the duties of the cloth and the pleasures of the flesh. A kind of metaphor," I extemporised, "for the neuroses of the inter-war era."

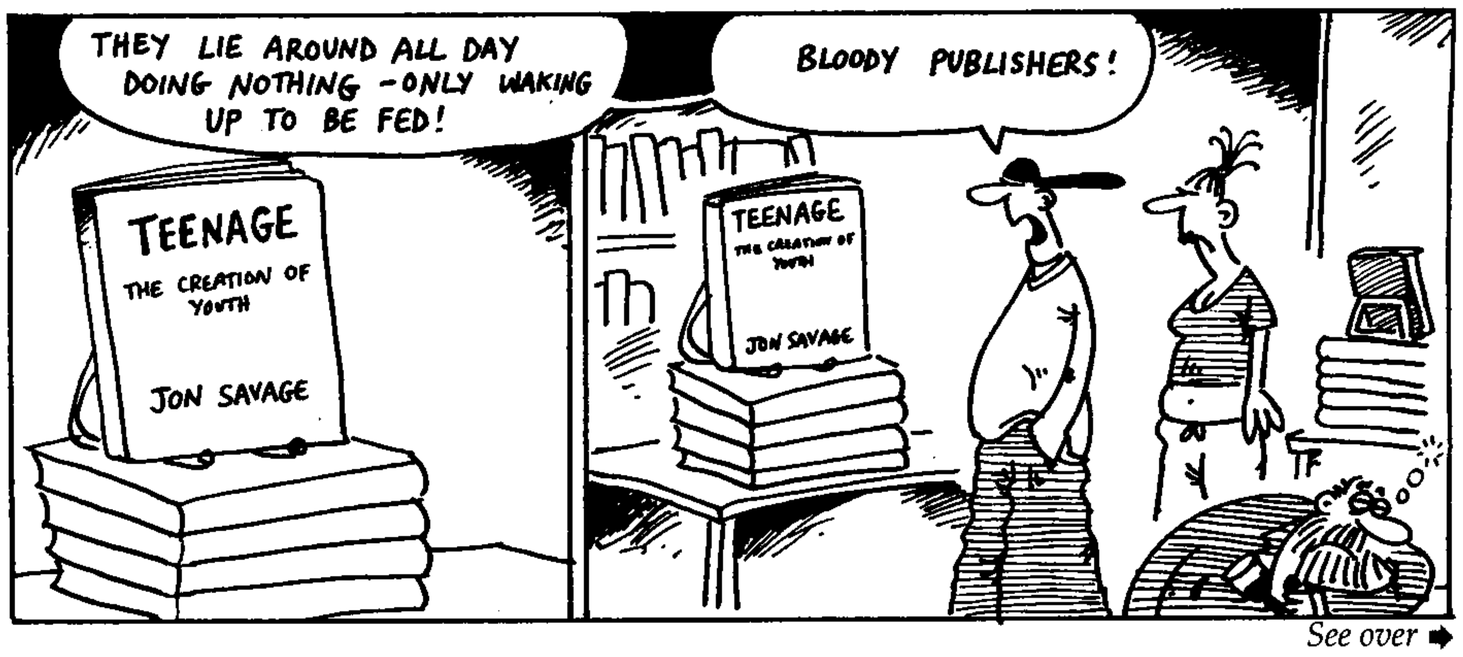
"Wasn't he the one who picked up tarts and got his head chewed off by a lion?" For once Fruitella looked interested. "I should leave out the neuroses of the inter-war era and just concentrate on the tarts."

"Done." Breathlessly I texted my ever-encouraging editor, Simon, with the news. Almost immediately the phone rang.

"John. Is that you mate?"

"Simon! I take it the idea of a three-month sabbatical to write my novel meets with your august approval?"

"Sorry John, but apparently Pan's People are reforming. At least that's what it says in the *Guardian*. I told them that seeing it's a culture piece we'd get our best man round…" [*continues*]



See over ➡

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ IN HIS latest volume of memoirs, which runs to a modest 796 pages, Naim Attallah-Disgusting reveals that he has destroyed all remaining copies of two novels which appeared under his name but were actually penned by his ghost-writer Jennie Erdal. He has also destroyed *A Woman A Week*, a collection of his profiles from the *Daily Express* (the work of Jennie Erdal, again). "Her contribution has been too close for comfort," he writes.

But not so close that he feels inhibited from re-using it: his new memoir includes several passages which were actually written some years ago by Erdal. One is a lengthy tribute to Cristina Odone, former editor of the *Catholic Herald*: "She exudes a deep sensuality and flirtatiousness... I have always felt a natural sympathy with Cristina. We are both Catholics, highly volatile, both conscious of the challenge of the faith..." And so on, without a word of acknowledgement to the holy ghost, here writing with tongue firmly in cheek.

■ UBER-AGENT Simon Trewin recently embarrassed himself when approaching a potential author.

He emailed award-winning blogger Zoe McCarthy to say how much he loved her website and that he would be interested in representing her if she wanted to write a book. McCarthy politely pointed out that if he were the avid reader of her blog that he claimed, he would surely have noticed her frequent references to the book deal she signed last year. The resulting tale of domestic relationships, *My Boyfriend Is A Twat*, is published in July.

■ RUMOURS were rife at the Booksellers' Conference at Harrogate last week as to who will step forward with a bid to buy the Borders chain.

Tim Waterstone was hotly tipped to make an offer for its Books Etc stores but is considered unlikely to want the music and DVD business that would come with the Borders part of the business. Former Hammicks and WH Smith guru Trevor Goul-Wheeker was also mentioned, as was Ottakars' founder James Heneage.

There were also suggestions that Waterstone's may be interested in the chain's airport stores. All of which was of great interest to current BA president, David Roche, who also happens to be CEO of Borders UK.

Marketing Week magazine ran a recent feature on the current state of Waterstone's with a handy list of recommendations to improve sales. Amusingly, the suggestions, which included running more backlist promotions, were pretty much exactly the things the chain has *stopped* doing in the past year or so under the new buying regime.

Waterstone's is marking its 25th anniversary this year with a promotion of the best books published since it opened. This is in marked contrast to the management's decision *not* to celebrate its 21st anniversary in 2003, when they didn't want to be seen to celebrate the heyday of founder Tim Waterstone.

VANITY CASE

VANITY publisher Writersworld describes itself as "the gold standard" of print-on-demand, but a number of out-of-pocket wannabe authors would beg to differ.

The company has a list of county court judgments against it totalling more than £20,000 owed to authors and former contractors. The *Eye* knows of at least a dozen unhappy writers who paid Writersworld up front for books that were never completed. And illustrators, editors and IT contractors have also complained about not being paid for their work by managing director Graham Cook.

The writers include Mark Quinlan, a retired civil servant and author of *British War Memorials* (since published elsewhere), who has won two court battles against Writersworld over the £3,000 he paid to have two books produced. Despite Cook being ordered to pay up at county court, and again on appeal, Mr Quinlan has little expectation of ever seeing a penny and says he wants to warn other authors.

The *Eye* contacted Cook, who runs the business from his home in Enstone, Oxfordshire. He told a sob story about cash-flow problems that he blames on a former employee who left more than two years ago and who now runs her own publishing company. He also blames her, other rival publishers and several authors for a "ruthless smear campaign" on the internet trying to ruin his business. Cook later bombarded the *Eye* with more than 50 semi-coherent emails, insisting that "the self-publishing industry is rife with stories of how on occasions you come across authors of whom whatever you do you cannot keep happy [*sic*]".

Many of those who have posted warnings about Cook's business in online writers' forums make no bones about the fact that they would like to see him out of business to protect other writers. Asked when he would refund authors who have ended up without books, Cook insisted it is "unfair" to expect him to refund authors (even when ordered to do so by the courts) who have "libelled" him on the internet or taken their books to rival publishers.

Those like Mr Quinlan who have complained about Cook's business practices have become targets of his fury, subjected to legal threats and blamed throughout Cook's emails to the *Eye* for all the company's troubles. Cook even told us he was going to have those who have criticised his business arrested for harassment. Funnily enough, the author hasn't had his own collar felt yet.

Oxfordshire Trading Standards said it had been contacted by a number of authors who had had contracts with Writersworld and "will be contacting the company to discuss the experiences of these authors and clarify the situation from the company's perspective". Cook confirmed he would indeed be reporting to trading standards for interview this month.

'Bookworm'

FIRST DRAFTS

Anton Chekhov

LIBRARY NEWS

■ HEALTH Secretary Patricia Hewitt was at Wood Green library in north London last month to launch a scheme to help people without computers access what the Department of Health describes as its "new flagship super website", NHS Choices.

Hewitt promised that the public would "be able to go into their local library and have trained librarians support them as they choose and book hospital appointments".

Notwithstanding the question of whether librarians are better placed to advise on treatment decisions than, say, GPs, or the fact that waiting times for a computer at many libraries can rival those in A&E, users of Wood Green library might be surprised to hear that their librarians have time to do the NHS's work.

The London borough of Haringey, which runs the library, is making £200,000 cuts to the service. Quite how the service will work in areas which no longer have trained librarians – or no longer have a library – is yet to be explained.

PENSION PLANNING
Stuart Bayliss, director, Annuity Direct
"Ian is fortunate enough to be in a scheme where his pension is linked to his final salary. In his case, at 555, he would be entitled to a pension of fifteen eightieths of his final salary,

The Times

MODESTY BLAZE

"I confess that I made him and his bellicose father the principal characters in a short story I wrote called *Footballers Don't Cry*. Initially rejected by Radio 3, it eventually appeared in the annual collection, *Winter's Tales*, then never seemed to stop being published. It was chosen in the *Reader's Digest* collection, Great Short Stories of the English-Speaking World, and was even broadcast on the BBC World Service in Mandarin." – Brian Glanville pays tribute to himself and of course, Alan Ball, *The Times*.

Private Eye's Worstseller Chart

Position	Author	Title	Publisher	Reported advance	Sales to date	Cost of advance per book	Copies needed to sell to make back advance
1	Carey Marx	*Marry Me*	Headline	£250,000	519	£481.70	189,566
2	Robert Littell	*Legends*	Duckworth	£250,000	1,276	£195.92	196,446
3	Marisha Pessl	*Special Topics In Calamity Physics*	Viking	£250,000	4,006	£62.41	167,950
4	Jane Fonda	*My Life So Far*	Ebury	£1,000,000	40,413	£24.74	769,230
5	Jon Snow	*Shooting History: A Personal Journey*	HarperPerennial	£600,000	58,812	£10.20	487,804

Pseuds Corner

For me, eating a bowl of muesli is a bit like a rebirth.

GERI HALLIWELL,
'My Week', The Times

He and Kaka are the sort of players who prompt comparisons with other forms of art. Music, most obviously. Ronaldo's mode is allegro molto vivace, with a pronounced fondness for bursts of staccato phrasing via those quick-stepping feet, his unorthodoxy extending to the fearless introduction of techniques that others might unveil only in rehearsal, for the amusement of their colleagues. Kaka plays at a permanent andante cantabile, with a sweetly flowing grace, his devastating sprint a thing of seemingly unhurried beauty, his body swaying as one change of direction blends seamlessly into another.

RICHARD WILLIAMS,
Guardian

Great beauty stirs us at very deep levels we are not normally in contact with. I feel this sometimes listening to music, especially Mozart. The sublime beauty (say of the slow movement of the string quartet K. 464) can seem almost too much for a mortal to bear. My partner, visiting Florence for the first time, found its beauty overwhelming and left by the next train.

HARRY EYRES,
Financial Times

Yet the struggle for supremacy between Mourinho and Sir Alex Ferguson has an internal dynamic that seems to be driving them towards the most dramatic conclusion to a trilogy Athens will have hosted since the first night of The Eumenides completed Aeschylus's Oresteia.

MATTHEW NORMAN,
Evening Standard

A better clue to what can be achieved lay in a starter of ham hock and foie gras terrine with soused vegetables and piccalilli syrup, a dish as widespread these days as prawn cocktail was in the 1970s.

ROBERT COCKROFT visits the Wortley Arms, near Barnsley, *Yorkshire Post*

Pseuds Corporate

Dear Mr Thompson
Are you successfully embedding your online recruitment strategy into your multi-layered approach?

Centaur Conferences, publicising an "online recruitment masterclass"

CONTRIBUTORS: Anon, Paul Connolly, Patricia Howard, J. James, G.J. Dak, Hamish Thompson.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

AUDITOR GENERAL

Bourn freebie

WHY does 73-year-old comptroller and auditor general Sir John Bourn, head of the National Audit Office since 1988 (pictured), carry on working long after other top public officials have called it a day?

Information unearthed by *Private Eye* using the Freedom of Information Act suggests it might be because the job has long enabled Sir John, whose task is to ensure taxpayers' money isn't wasted, to live the high life at the expense of, er, the taxpayer.

Although the NAO (motto "helping the nation spend wisely") might be thought a largely domestic operation, in the three years up to this March Sir John managed 43 separate foreign trips, on 22 of which he was accompanied by his wife Ardita.

Among Sir John and Lady Bourn's crucial engagements were a four-day trip to Mauritius for a "peer review" of the island's audit office and, in one six-week period in 2005, successive trips to India, Morocco and Canada to discuss training projects and a "global working group". All told, in the past three years the total travel bill for Sir John's private office tops £336,000, of which £76,000 went on Lady Bourn's fares.

The NAO insists that "Lady Bourn attends where necessary to meet the expectations of the host in line with established practice in the diplomatic service and her presence is greatly appreciated". Except that Sir John is the country's top public beancounter, not a diplomat. And what little is known of the trips on which Lady Bourn has travelled suggests it isn't all work, work, work either.

In February 2005 the Bourns stayed a couple of days extra in Auckland, New Zealand, once the Commonwealth Auditors' Conference had finished. Their trip to a two-day "working group on privatisation" in Brazil that September was extended by three days. But most pleasant of all was a sojourn in the Bahamas six months ago to attend the Caribbean Organisation of State Audit Offices Congress. The conference ran from 16th to 19th October, but the couple didn't travel until the 18th. After a tough day's work on the 19th they took a much-needed break under the Caribbean sun (a balmy 80°C in October) before flying home five days later. Sir John also made 12 single-night trips for all but one of which, oddly, Lady Bourn's wifely diplomatic presence wasn't required.

The NAO said it couldn't name the hotels the Bourns stayed in – but they are known to do things in style. When the NAO audited the International Atomic Energy Authority for nine years until 2003, on his regular visits to its Vienna HQ Sir John always insisted on staying in a suite at the city's finest hotel, the Sacher, costing several hundreds of pounds a night. The same goes for flying. Until it was grounded four years ago, Sir John made trips to the US on Concorde, eschewing the much cheaper Jumbo "in order to manage competing demands in the UK and USA", according to the NAO.

Some taxpayers, and maybe even the Public Accounts Commission that oversees the NAO, might ponder the value of Sir John's globe-trotting. Did he really need to attend the Caribbean auditors' get-together (with his wife) rather than stay at home and work on Britain's public finances? Or was he enticed by a few days' subsidised holiday after a single day's business? And weren't many of the meetings quite technical and more suited to one of the NAO's numerous directors or specialists?

Commenting on suspect dealings elsewhere recently, Sir John quoted Lord Nolan on standards: "Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends." It was presumably such high principles that a year ago persuaded the Prime Minister to appoint Sir John as his "independent adviser on ministerial interests" in the wake of David Blunkett inappropriately obtaining first-class rail tickets for his then squeeze Kimberly Fortier.

Six months later Sir John and Lady Bourn were sunning themselves in the Bahamas at public expense – first class all the way, of course.

DEEPCUT

Secret forces

THE cover-up over the deaths of four young recruits at the Deepcut army barracks continues with news that the Devon & Cornwall police force report into the affair will not be released.

Just as the Blake report on the deaths raised more questions than it answered (*Eye* 1167), the force's detailed reasons for not releasing its report seem to be just those why it should be made public: that it is likely to have a negative impact on public confidence in Surrey police; it may undermine confidence in the army and in particular army recruit training programmes; it may cause distress or harm to those named in the report against whom allegations have been made; and it may raise wider concerns about the government's excuses.

The FOI request was made by the *Surrey Advertiser*, which waited a year for the negative reply. The force's information officer said that though the report would "contribute to the quality and accuracy of debate … in this nationally important case", its release might damage the effectiveness of any future inter-police force reviews. "Individuals will be less willing to co-operate or provide free and candid views, and in addition … disclosure is very likely to prejudice certain identifiable individuals."

Meanwhile, fall-out continues from other attempts to end the secrecy. Terry Dicks, a former Tory MP and now a Surrey county councillor, found himself under investigation by the Standards Board for England for daring to request a copy of the report, demanding it be made public and contacting the families of the dead recruits (pictured).

At the time he sat on the Surrey Police Authority, which complained that he had disclosed confidential information, compromised its authority and brought it into disrepute. Apart from a mild rebuke about his contact with the media, he was exonerated by the Standards Board – but then launched his own complaint against Surrey's chief constable Robert Quick, alleging, among other things, discrimination because Quick had disclosed the report to some members of the police authority and not him.

Last November, Frank Whiteley, the chief constable of Hertfordshire, cleared Quick of wrongdoing. Dicks appealed to the Independent Police Complaints Authority complaining that getting one member of the Association of Chief Police Officers to investigate another was far from "independent". But last month the IPCC threw out Dicks' appeal; his treatment by Quick was deemed different but not unfair.

"The whole thing stinks, but I can take it no further," Dicks told the *Eye*.

LEGAL NEWS

Wrong on rights

VERA BAIRD QC isn't the only Labour lawyer and minister accused of hypocrisy over "reform" of the legal aid system.

Lord Falconer, secretary of state for constitutional affairs (pictured), has been touring the country promoting human rights. "From Magna Carta to the Human Rights Act stretches a golden thread of rights in Britain, a thread to which we must and we will give support," he insisted.

Falconer paid particular homage to those who work to protect these rights – people, no doubt, like Julie Burton, a lawyer who works mainly for clients with mental health, learning or physical disabilities, usually on low incomes. Ms Burton runs the only firm in north and mid-Wales specialising in community care and special educational needs law, and is one of only three covering mental health law. Ninety percent of her practice funding comes from legal aid.

Ms Burton's clients include C.J., a quadriplegic victim of a motorbike accident who needed round-the-clock care but received only 30 hours a week from social services. After a nine-month battle with both health and social care providers, who fought each other as well as Ms Burton, she eventually secured him 24-hour support.

She also represented K.O., a profoundly deaf child with diabetes whose single mother needed help to enable him to attend after-school and

holiday childcare schemes so she could work to support them. Only after the law firm commenced legal proceedings did the local authority provide a full package of care. (As *Eye* readers know, cash-strapped authorities often wait for the court threat before providing services: any delay in meeting their obligations saves money.)

Both cases relied on legal aid and human rights law. But Burton's niche practice is, like those relying on criminal legal aid, threatened by the flat-rate fee for civil cases – £296 for education, £290 for community care and a yet unknown rate for mental health – and the uncertainty of knowing whether complex cases will qualify for any uplift in fees. She has already written to the Legal Services Commission warning that she may no longer be able to carry out such work.

Ms Burton wrote to Falconer after attending his speech on the importance of human rights. "Without lawyers like me prepared to use the Human Rights Act to promote the rights of the underprivileged and marginalised, the HRA would be of far less value," she told him. "But the government is making it almost impossible for me and my like to continue… We are being asked to make a choice between quality of advice and fair pay."

Alas, we cannot know what his lordship thinks of her arguments as he has not yet found time to reply. But when Plaid Cymru MP Elfyn Llwyd raised the matter with Vera "Conscience" Baird, she showed the same degree of concern she has done for criminal legal aid firms. She was "sorry to hear about the lady from Wales", but added: "We will have to look for someone else who can provide that service to the vulnerable population that she serves."

But where on earth from?

Lording it up

THE *Eye* wishes to apologise to Lord Brennan QC, the man who assesses compensation for miscarriage of justice victims and charges them for "board and lodgings" while wrongly imprisoned.

Last issue we suggested that he was paid a mere £340 for each simple case he considers and £760 for the trickier claims. In fact, as of July 2006, he has been earning £500 for a simple claim and £1,000 for the more complex cases.

No one much knew about this pay rise until last month, when Lib Dem MP Norman Baker asked questions about Brennan's pay in the Commons. Although the rise was agreed and implemented by the Home Office in 2006, "due to an oversight" formal Treasury approval was not given until February 2007. "This oversight, which is regretted, has been brought to the attention of the Home Office accounting officer," said the red-faced minister for criminal justice, Gerry Sutcliffe.

CUSTODY

Children in need

CHILD jails are failing to deal with young inmates who have suffered serious abuse, mistreatment or neglect before their incarceration, but the Youth Justice Board is suppressing a report detailing the problem and possible ways to tackle it.

Pages from the report, *Past Abuse Suffered by Children in Custody: A way forward*, that were seen by the *Eye* say there has been little attempt to come up with a system to address the consequences of abuse. The report, compiled by child psychiatrists, senior YJB staff and representatives from the Association of Directors of Social Services and the departments of health and education, made a number of recommendations. It urges better staff training and awareness and ensuring that children in custody have a stable, consistent adult worker they can develop trust in.

The report was completed last November but has not been published. In response to a Freedom of Information request in April from the Howard League for Penal Reform, the YJB said the report was exempt from being released as it was "intended for future publication", although it could be some time before it sees the light of day as it will only be published as part of a wider work that the YJB "plans to commission".

Meanwhile, the YJB is keen to play down the findings of the report, insisting that it "was very small in scope and not as rigorous as we would normally demand".

That certainly wasn't the view of the report's authors, whose own conclusions included calling for "wide dissemination of this report" to raise awareness of the problem.

Hospital bed-count

PLANS to lock up more people with mental health problems under legislation being driven through a Commons committee could yet come unstuck thanks to health service cuts.

Figures revealed by the Mental Health Nurses Association show a 19 percent drop in inpatient hospital beds available for mental health patients since 1997, from 36,601 to 29,802. The MHNA says that any increase in compulsory admissions thanks to the law would put even greater strain on the bed shortage. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust alone has lost 90 beds in the past two years.

Not only would the Mental Health Bill allow people with untreatable personality disorders to be sectioned, the legislation also proposes allowing people who aren't psychiatrists (including social workers and occupational therapists) to be the "responsible clinician" when a patient is to be locked up.

The Bill's measures to increase detention and compulsory treatment, driven by a small number of high profile murders, were described last month by Labour peer Lord Bragg as "inhumane, inefficient and, above all, unfair". The moves have also been condemned by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the BMA, as well as by an alliance of mental health charities, who say that compulsion will make it even more difficult to deal with problem patients, who will avoid engaging with mental health services at all for fear of being locked up. They say that improving existing mental health care would do more to prevent violent crime by patients.

WIND FARMS

Koop what a stinker

A 17-turbine windfarm in mountainous wilderness owned by the former chairman of the National Trust for Scotland, millionaire banker Hamish Leslie Melville, was given the go-ahead by the Highland Council last month.

Despite the advice of planning officers that the application could be "significantly detrimental" in an area of great natural beauty, the council agreed "not to object" to the Lochluichart windfarm after the initial plan for 22 turbines was reduced to 17 by new wind energy company Infinergy. The firm will receive millions of pounds in subsidy from UK taxpayers for producing "green" power. But is Infinergy as clean as its energy?

The company is a partnership between UK property firm Savills and Dutch company Koop Duurzame Energie (KDE), part of the giant Koop Group, and stands to receive £7m a year in subsidies for renewables.

Three years ago the Koop Group was at the centre of a huge corruption scandal in the Netherlands. Its construction subsidiary, Koop Tjuchem, was fined £4.27m for its part in rigging Dutch government construction contracts, along with four other companies. Boss Henk Koop was sentenced to 180 hours' community service for forgery and bribing a civil servant.

POLICE

Asset snatchers

HANG on to your homes, cars and money because the government is sneaking through new powers that will let Knacker seize your assets if they believe – yes, just believe – that you are engaged in crime.

An unnoticed clause in the Serious Crime Bill which is making its way through Parliament massively extends the use of "civil recovery" – the seizing of assets in the civil courts on the "balance of probabilities" without needing a conviction. This conveniently does away with the cumbersome, old-fashioned and expensive process of a jury trial, as well as arcane notions that someone is innocent until proven guilty "beyond reasonable doubt".

When civil recovery was first launched in 2002, Claire Montgomery QC, of Matrix Chambers, pointed out that civil recovery could not only "destroy the essence of the presumption of innocence" but also lead to "arbitrary and irrational results".

John Wadham, then director of Liberty, said the powers proposed were draconian. "When it comes to the decision itself there will be no jury and the judge will take the decision on the balance of probabilities – a person will be convicted on the basis that they are 'probably' guilty."

Civil recovery was originally considered so lethal it was kept within the new Asset Recovery Agency specifically to keep it out of police hands. But at the beginning of 2007 the government, already jittery over the Home Office's many cock-ups, buckled in the face of one lone Tory MP who complained that ARA was not as profitable as Tony Blair had once promised. (Since when have law enforcement agencies been required to turn a profit?)

As a result, Home Office minister Vincent "The Frog" Croaker decided to allow voracious empire builders at the dysfunctional Serious and Organised Crime Agency to gobble up ARA. As we pointed out in *Eye* 1178 it was a truly brilliant idea to sacrifice the successful, transparent and open ARA and feed it to the failing, secretive and spooky Soca.

Not only are ARA's draconian powers to be transferred to the unaccountable Soca, but the government has sneaked in a three-word clause saying the powers can be transferred to any of the "prosecution authorities" – a difference that opens the civil recovery powers to all law enforcement bodies, with none of the safeguards instituted at ARA.

Croaker has privately told the Crown Prosecution Service (which acts for all police forces), Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Serious Fraud Office and also Northern Ireland prosecutors that they will get these extra powers next April. There is no reason why other prosecutors, including Trading Standards officers and Uncle Tom Cobley and all, won't get them later too.

The question is: how long before the Old Bill – no great fans of the jury trial because people can get acquitted – and assorted other outfits start to use civil recovery instead of prosecution?

BAE SYSTEMS

Playing silly buggers

THOUGH BAE Systems is one of Britain's biggest firms and has regular access to ministers, when it needed help dealing with the Campaign Against the Arms Trade it hired a Conservative Party activist whom even fellow Tories have accused of spying.

BAE Systems admitted paying Paul Mercer £2,500 a month to gather information on CAAT through his exotically named firm, LigneDeux Associates. BAE was forced to admit the relationship because, embarrassingly, Mercer had supplied it with a confidential legal document that came from within the Campaign Against the Arms Trade outlining advice from CAAT's lawyers about a potential court action against BAE.

BAE's lawyers, presumably shocked when they learnt of the presence of this legally privileged item, an internal email, in BAE's hands, handed it back – though with all traces of senders and receivers deleted. CAAT then took out injunctions to force BAE Systems and later Paul Mercer to explain how they had got hold of the document.

Mercer has been collating detailed information on protesters and campaigners since the 1980s. He supplied Michael Heseltine with information on CND, and he published a "directory of political organisations" which was clearly drawn up from detailed files on thousands of campaigners and lefty types (like *Private Eye*'s Paul Foot who had two entries).

In 1989, moderates in the Young Conservatives accused Mercer of using an electronic bug to spy on them. Supporters of Martin Woodroofe, a moderate leadership candidate for the YC, were meeting in a hotel near Rugby when they found a "pill box-sized" listening device behind the curtains. When the bug was uncovered, Mercer, who supported Woodroofe's hard-right opponent, was seen racing away in a white van. The Woodroofe camp was convinced he was the bugger.

Mercer denied responsibility for the electronic surveillance, but police said they assumed the van driver was positioned to pick up signals from the bug. Mercer did admit through an intermediary that he had taken photos and made notes at meetings of the moderate faction.

On this occasion, when CAAT's lawyers wanted to serve an injunction on Mercer to find out how he had got hold of their confidential legal advice, they found his address was unavailable but that he collects his post from a newsagent's in Loughborough. CAAT's lawyer spent a cold day on a bench outside the shop waiting for Mercer until the newsagent took pity and passed on the undercover operator's mobile phone number. Mercer would still not give an address, but agreed to accept the injunction at a café by King's Cross Station in London. He finally claimed that the documents had been put on a CD and posted to him unsolicited… which was handy!

Number crunching

£15m ■ Remuneration lost by Lord Browne by resigning early from BP due to lying in court

15 ■ Lives lost in explosion at BP refinery in Texas after company "failed to perform management accountabilities", for which Lord Browne did not have to resign

PENSIONS

Old Macdonald

WITHIN an hour of paying £2bn for O2 Airwave, the emergency services radio system, private equity investors at Australian company Macquarie had announced the closure of Airwave's final salary pension scheme.

The money men are replacing it with a "defined contribution" scheme (much worse value for the 700 staff), and the Communication Workers Union is so furious it is ready to strike. The CWU suspects Macquarie had to borrow heavily to fund the purchase and wants to claw something back from the workers.

If this is the unacceptable face of private equity capitalism, who is behind the move? Step forward one-time shipyard worker and socialist firebrand Lord Macdonald of Tradeston, aka Gus Macdonald (pictured).

The former Labour cabinet minister now chairs Macquarie Investment Banking Group, Europe, where he is well placed to reap the rewards of policies enacted when he was in office. Under Tony Blair, Macdonald was in charge of "public service reform" and promoted privatisation heavily. Airwave was one of Labour's bigger and more expensive private contracts.

As a minister, Macdonald always used to claim that putting public sector work out to the private sector would not affect pensions. "The government will meet its commitments on pension rights and a two-tier workforce whilst retaining flexibility," he promised, telling the Lords that assurances on pension rights would "end the need to strike".

But that was then. Anyone remember the lines of that old socialist ditty "The working class can kiss my arse… I've got the foreman's job at last"?

FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **INVESTIGATIONS** are under way as to how Dave Partridge, the Revenue & Customs Prosecutions Office director of operations, came to hire his wife Michaela ahead of nineteen other applicants as a "human resources" consultant (see last *Eye*). But it seems Dave has form. While previously in charge of "corporate services" at the Serious Fraud Office, he also took on a human resources consultant – one, er, Mrs Michaela Partridge, working there "freelance" under the company name of People Business. And, wouldn't you know, People Business's company secretary is a certain Dave Partridge!

The Treasury claimed the RCPO affair was "within the bounds of regularity and propriety" – but even they might find handing public contracts to your own firm a bit much.

■ **MORE** on EDS, the IT bunglers handed the £700m second phase of the MoD contract to install 44,000 computers (*Eye* 1180), without competition and despite a woeful delay on the first part of the deal. A reader helpfully pointed out that this equates to £15,900 per machine.

Informed that the price of a standard desktop computer under the EDS contract had risen from £1,600 a year, the *Eye* checked the figure with the MoD. Nonsense, said a spokeswoman; the support cost per workstation would be "no more than £1,600 per annum".

This is a porky pie. The *Eye* got hold of part of the DII catalogue, which quoted a "capital charge" of £485, followed by a "monthly charge (ongoing)" of £440 – around £5,300 a year for just one computer. The MoD claimed the catalogue is a "work in progress" and the figures were "indicative". So will they come down? Answer came there none.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

In the City

THE long, uninterrupted rise then humiliating, precipitous fall of Lord Browne of BP – from Sun King to self-confessed perjurer – is yet another example of the celebrity CEO culture so beloved of financial hacks.

Personalities are so much more colourful and easier to extol than boring numbers. Suits too increasingly want their spot in the sun and, in a world increasingly dominated by celebrity, even grey men like John Browne want their share. Look at the shy and retiring Sir Terry Leahy of Tesco, who has in many ways now assumed the Browne mantle as Britain's most lauded if not best-loved businessman after Richard Branson and Philip Green.

So, unlike his opposite numbers at Shell or smaller oil companies, Browne became a star. He was made a star by the broadsheets and magazines who spoke ever more glowingly of his – and then BP's – achievements. Hundreds of column inches were devoted to gushing profiles. Thousands of words extolled his wit and wisdom. He was regularly voted Britain's "most admired" or "most impressive" businessman.

Not surprisingly, BP enjoyed a very close relationship with City editors and their editors. The *Financial Times* was an enthusiastic cheerleader. So too were the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Telegraph*. This relationship ensured BP often received favorable or sympathetic coverage when there was potential bad news, such as oil spills in Alaska or environmental issues over its pipeline in Central Asia. Only the 2005 explosion at the poorly maintained Texas refinery finally blew the slick Browne/ BP press machine out of the water. Corporate manslaughter due to cost cutting is hard to spin.

No wonder then that Browne was soon cozied up to by New Labour. BP was quickly seen by some as meaning "Blair Petroleum", especially after Browne recruited top Blairite Anji Hunter. The Dear Leader could always be counted on to support BP's side abroad and Chancellor Gordon Brown was no threat at home.

Browne was picked by Blair to become one of the first "People's Peers". Not that he ever bothered too much about turning up at the House of Lords. A total attendance of 16 times between 2001 and 2006 out of a maximum 784 sittings. The former BP chief executive did not vote once in that period. Perhaps now he will have more time to attend to his supposed duties as a people's peer.

But in all the tidal waves of praise there was never any room for the words "gay" or "homosexual" – despite the fact that to many in BP and the City it was an accepted fact. However, for the Browne hagiographers these were facts that dare not speak their name. Browne did not discuss it and so neither did they (if they wanted to keep on the bright side of the Sun King).

Even Peter Wright, editor of the *Mail on Sunday*, which finally outed Browne, was reportedly disbelieving when first informed of this fact some years ago. Like his useful newfound Labour contact, the former trade secretary Peter Mandelson, Browne was able to persuade those who knew what was good for them to overlook his boyfriend.

Since the fall, there is much talk by those City scribes who said nothing at the time that this was an "open secret". But it was one they carefully kept from their readers. Like the Washington press corps and JFK's hyperactive partying, Browne's homosexuality was seen by his City boosters as no concern of the public or shareholders.

The financial media's love affair with Browne was only ended by the 15 deaths at the BP refinery in Texas, the revelations of company culpability and Browne's weasel-worded "moral" responsibility – the new "get out of jail" card for suits who see the threat of jail and expensive legal actions.

The BP chief exec's downfall and the events leading up to his unwanted, expedited retirement showed the price of all that hero worship. Browne clearly believed, like the original Sun King, that "l'etat c'est moi" – in this case BP. This made him misjudge his ability to stay on beyond 2008 on the basis that the BP board, which he had largely moulded, would do what he wanted. He found chairman Peter Sutherland was not in his pocket even if others were.

Browne had clearly become so high on his own supply of puffery that he felt able to make use of BP personnel for his and his boyfriend's benefit, confident that it would not be questioned and if it was, would be accepted – which it was. That similar arrogance also caused him to assume he could lie his way out of the embarrassment of Jeff Chevalier's allegations. After all, John Browne was not a man used to hearing the word "no".

Lord Browne joins a long list of media-made CEO heroes who became zeroes – most recently Jeff Skilling of Enron and Bernie Ebbers of WorldCom, but going back to Ernest Saunders of Guinness and even earlier, Jim Slater. All of these turned out to be made of clay, which somehow the media with its love of celebrities and the flattery of presumed access failed to either see or report. Until it was unavoidable.

THE man who will now have to decide whether Lord Browne is prosecuted for perjury – assuming he is not reshuffled out of his misery – is the Dear Leader's legal poodle, the attorney general Lord Goldsmith. Undoubtedly the Blair view would be that his old friend John has suffered enough, the reason why the *Mail on Sunday* not Mr Justice Eady referred Browne's lies to the attorney general.

But the courts traditionally take a dim view of perjury, and high profile perjury for gain – financial or reputational – is usually prosecuted, if only to set an example. Jeffrey Archer and Jonathan Aitken also lied under oath in civil proceedings. And Goldsmith announced only last month, when defending his role in gagging the BBC over Lord Levy and the cash-for-honours affair, that "my duty is to the law first".

But does Goldsmith always know what he is saying? That comment followed his shameless derailing of the BAe Systems Saudi kickbacks case when suddenly the national interest and jobs came first.

Then last week, once again called upon to defend his pressure on the Serious Farce Office to drop the Saudi case in the face of criticism from the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Goldsmith astonishingly described as "very compelling" Britain's "efforts in the fight against corruption". This despite the fact that no overseas corruption case has been brought in Britain since Labour came to power ten years ago, and Labour has failed to introduce a long promised anti-corruption law that would make such prosecutions easier.

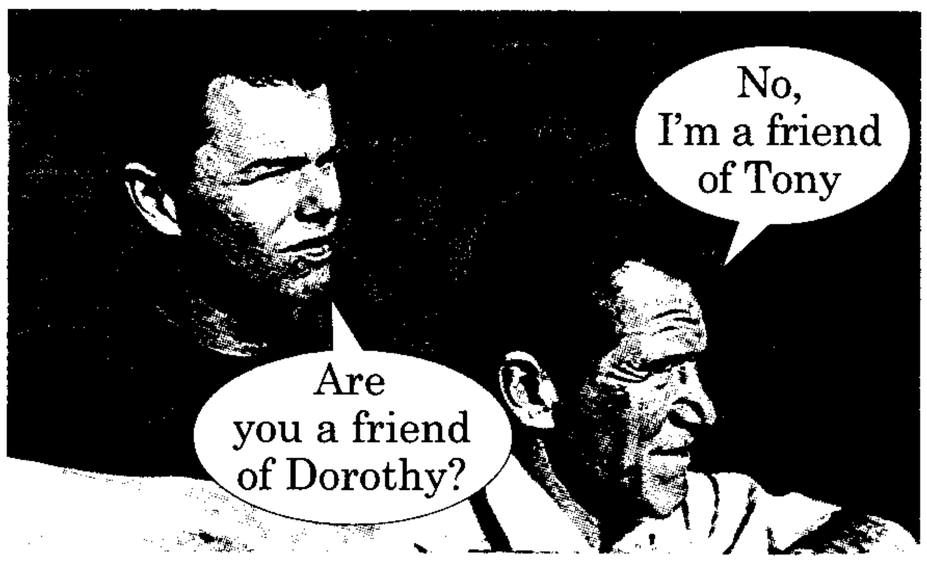
No wonder the US authorities have officially criticised the Saudi surrender as a breach of Britain's obligations under the OECD anti-corruption convention. It would not be a surprise if – with the support of BAe's rival American merchants of war – the Justice Department and the Securities & Exchange Commission decided to occupy the field vacated by the SFO. After all, the SEC has just stepped up its probe of the bribery allegations against the German giant Siemens, which, like BAe, is listed on Wall Street. Only a fraction of the bribery alleged against Siemens is US-based, but prosecutors have made it clear from previous cases that they will prosecute non-US companies for breaches of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

THE revelation that big Tory donor Lord Laidlaw has not after all assumed even nominal UK tax residence in return for his 2004 peerage, as he had agreed to do, raises an interesting question as to the purpose of his London address – a flat in Eaton Square, Belgravia – provided in corporate records for two directorships last year. It was clearly not to provide a false impression to the Lords Appointments Commission, or anyone else who wondered whether he still lived in Monaco, where he also retains an address. Perhaps it was to provide a base for his infrequent visits to the Lords: 81 attendances between 2004 and 2006, out of a possible 326.

Laidlaw is clearly concerned about giving up his long established non-resident status for a club membership that might be short-lived if the Lords becomes all-elected. Right now there is presumably no way the UK taxman can attack the £700m-plus he received from selling his IIR conference business in 2005. But if he was to have become UK-tax resident before the sale, that could give an opening to present a large capital gains tax bill. The sale was probably not on the cards when Laidlaw grabbed the peerage in return for his support of the Tories in Scotland. Not that they are going to do much about his reneging on the deal with the LAC. The party still needs Laidlaw's money and he has lent £3.5m out to them on favorable terms.

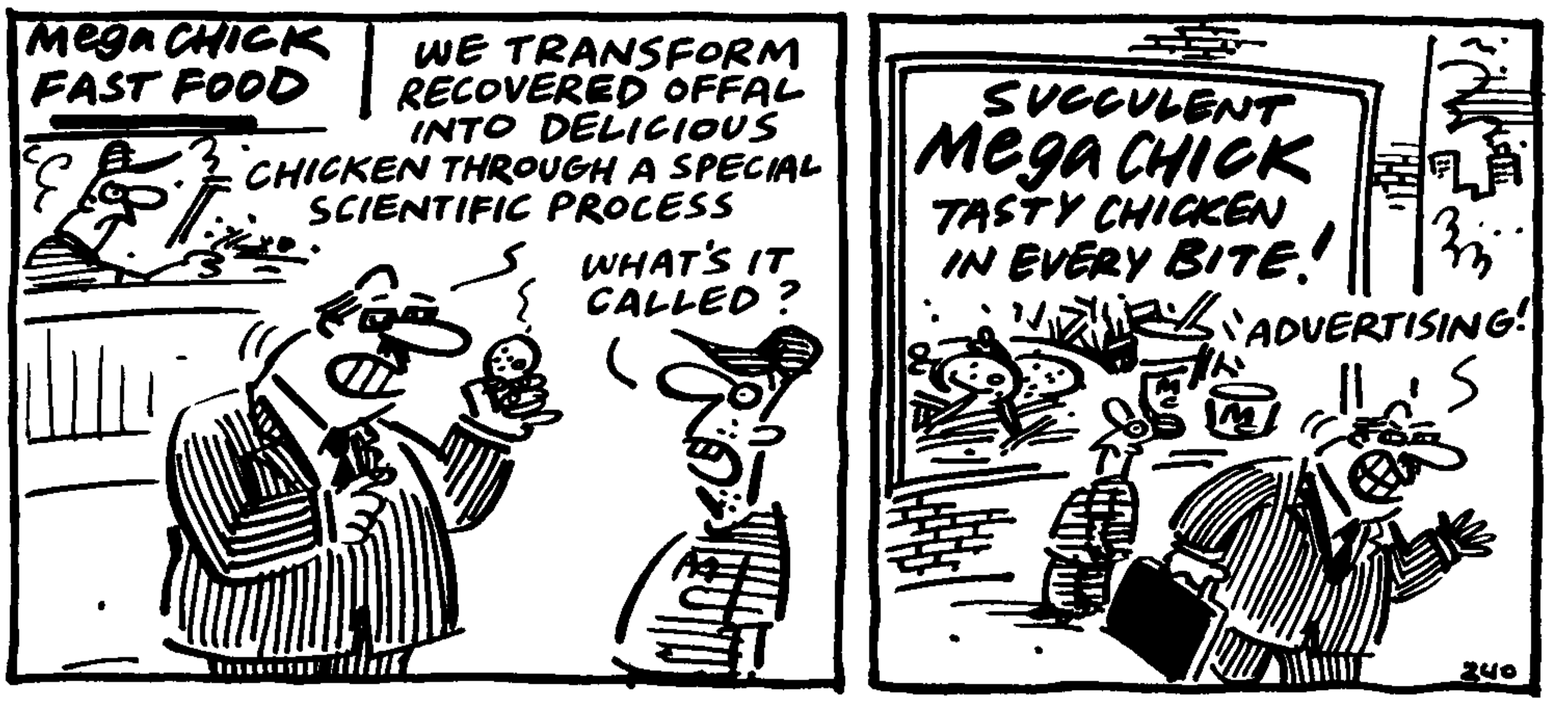
MPs are right to be concerned about the mushrooming cost of the MG Rover investigation by outside inspectors for the Department of Timidity & Inaction: £8.4m and

BROWNE'S SHAMEFUL SECRET



THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG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counting after two years. Remarkably, all but £1m of that cost has been run up by forensic accountants BDO Stoy Hayward, in which one of the two inspectors, Gervase MacGregor, is a partner. There are rumours, no doubt unfounded, that there has been no stinting when it came to expenses such as hotels and hire cars, but that will be as nothing in comparison to the time billed by the army of beancounters.

More than a decade ago the Tories decided that this style of DTI inquiry was too expensive, took too long and produced a work of history rather than a brief for a successful prosecution. Following the giant tomes belatedly produced by the investigations into Guinness, Consolidated Gold Fields, House of Fraser and Wace Group, it was thought such exercises were themselves history.

However, they still provide the long grass for politicians, justice delayed for the guilty and unlimited money-making for those lucky enough to get the call. So any judgments into government failings over MG Rover – which crashed shortly before the last election – could be safely delayed while appearing to do something. Always a good Westminster tactic.

The adoption of the adversarial approach towards the inspectors by those under investigation – in this case the Phoenix Four, who benefited greatly despite the MG Rover car wreck – plus the need to give any target of criticism the right to respond, ensures such inquiries are costly marathons. Which is why the then trade secretary Michael Heseltine wanted no more.

The problem now is how to bring the game to an end when only the taxpayer gains from that result. The Volcker report into the mass fraud and corruption involved in the United Nations' oil-for-food programme in Iraq took a little over two years and involved billions and 2,500 companies. There seems little chance that the MG Rover report will be completed before 2008 – at the earliest.

'Slicker'

EYE TOLD YOU SO

MR JUSTICE EADY was unimpressed with Lord Browne's courtroom attempts to "trash" the reputation of his former lover, Jeff Chevalier, with unsupported allegations of drink and drug abuse. But of course, Lord Browne has form when it comes to smearing his foes.

Back in 2004, the professionalism and objectivity of BP whistleblower Derek Mortimore were questioned in a damning "independent" report – paid for and vetted by BP – after he was sacked for voicing concerns over the construction of the £2bn Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline. As *Eye* 1171 reported, Mortimore, a pipelines expert, had spotted that the anticorrosion paint used to seal and protect welds on the pipeline was not up to the job.

The American engineering firm commissioned to write the "independent" report didn't even interview Mortimore. Instead, using documents selected and submitted by BP, it dismissed him as being out of his technical depth, financially motivated and having an axe to grind. As paymaster, BP was even able to go through a draft removing names that might cause embarrassment before it was released.

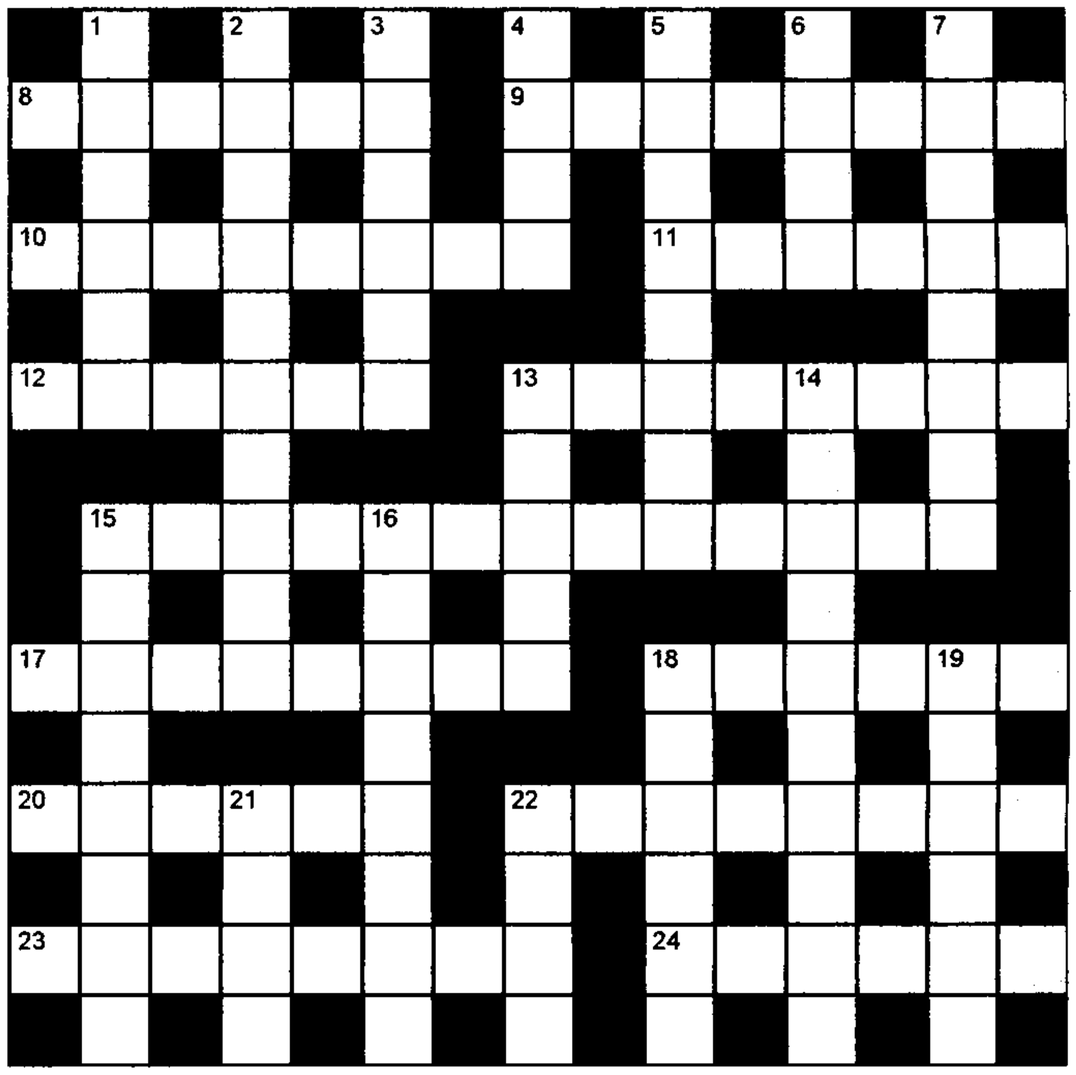
However, Mortimore may yet have the last laugh: US regulators investigating the 2003 Alaska oil spill have slammed the corrupt culture at BP's pipeline division, and John Dingell, chairman of the House of Representatives committee looking into the disaster, is considering calling Mortimore as a witness.

EYE CROSSWORD 339

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 18 May 2007

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

8 Alex's stuffed – going round the bend about it (6)
9 European country snatching Yasir's chief for Palestine (4,4)
10/21 Here there are lashings of pop with gin (PS. getting pissed) (8-4)
11 Limp? It's cunning to internalise supergroup, getting end away (6)
12 Lunatic pervertedly lays Cyclops on date (6)
13 Ex-PM Tony Blair extremely protective of chopper (having been snipped) (8)
15 House hush-hush Ray's philandering – the doctor reckons being so is too much for him (4,9)
17 Snoop hard at it getting stiff (8)
18 Some time before Piers Morgan type gets the point – "Retire!" (6)
20 One on the job, casually starts to lick erotically, giving a bit of head (6)
22 Being a peer is miserable (8)
23 Bill screwed without fuss, messily, Joy in every part (8)
24 "Wet" hugging Maggie's no.2, getting "one a certain shade of red" (6)

DOWN

1 Balls covering he'd operated on – about as up-to-date as you can get (3-3)
2 Sex is head from dwarf having tendency to fart? (5-5)
3 Condoleezza, finally on line, misrepresented what UK and US are supposed to be (6)
4/22dn. Screw a lot, like on the carpet? (4,4)
5 Ex-wrinkly given hot tongue (3,5)
6 Part of your member left inside woman (4)
7 Poor Nobby's having to swallow Brenda's condescension (8)
13 Naff as a recently done painting? (5)
14 Brown's luck, taking tumble on the way up? (10)
15 No stranger to filth, Congress possibly needs escape (8)
16 Thrust against Dicky and beat it (5,3)
18 Congress coming from behind as party gets hollow majority (6)
19 Wandering hands encircling one's sweet puffy thing (6)
21 See 10ac.
22 See 4dn.

Crossword 338 winner: JULIET MOLLOY

ACROSS: 1 Scrumpy 5 Commons 9 Spit 10 Placidness 12 Sleaze 13 Man-of-war 14 Tabloid press 18 Domino theory 20 Majestic 22 Angela 24 Legal costs 25 Orbs 26 Frigate 27 Blemish.

DOWN: 2 Copulate 3 Ultra 4 Pepperoni 6 Onion 7 Manifesto 8 Nassau 11 Armed forces 15 Boomerang 16 Rehearsal 17 Syllabus 19 Career 21 Tacit 23 Gloom.

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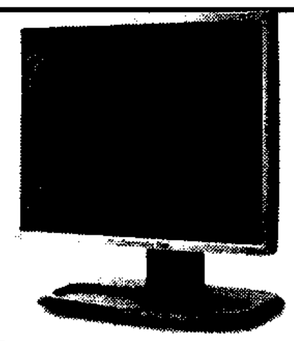

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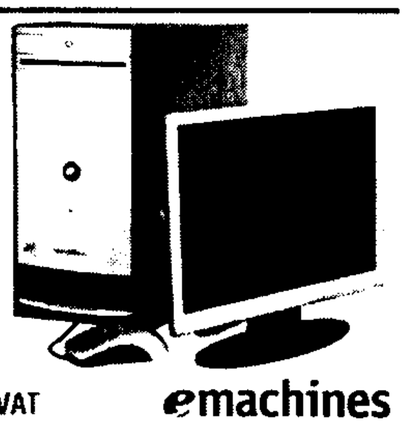

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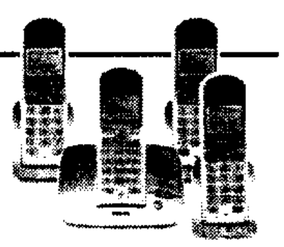

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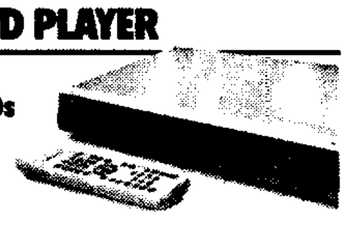

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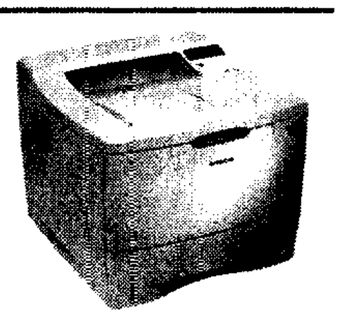

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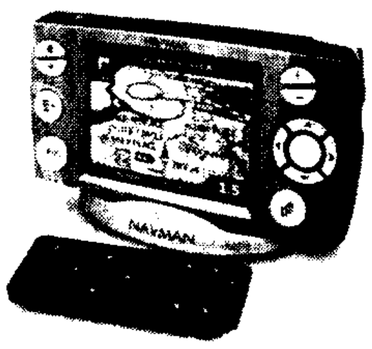

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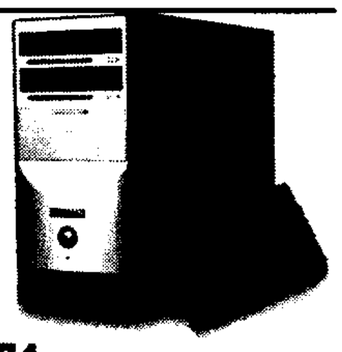

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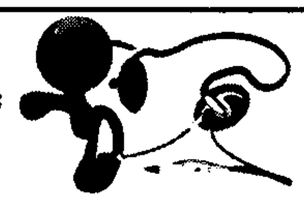

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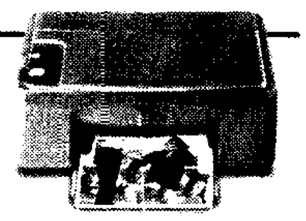

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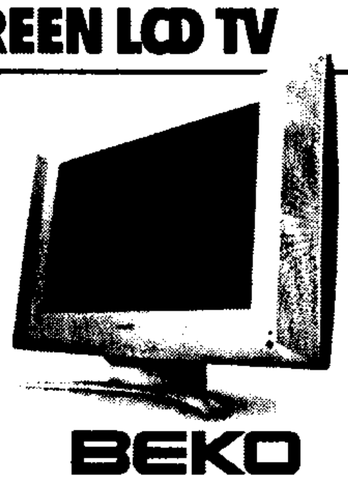

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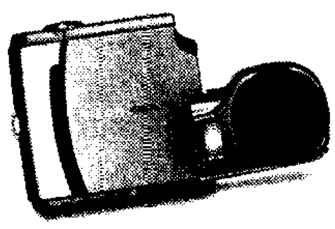

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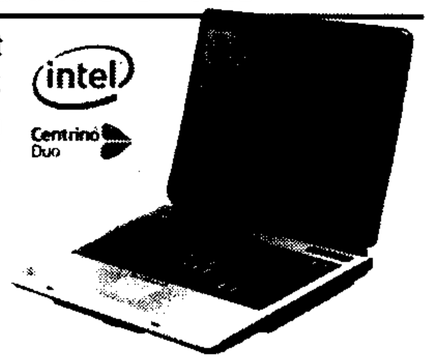

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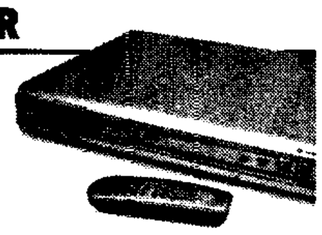

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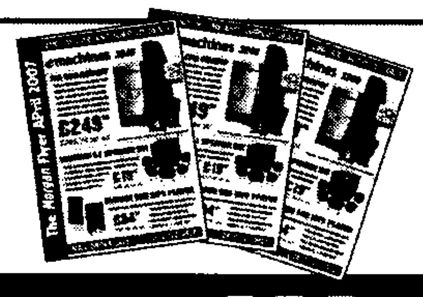

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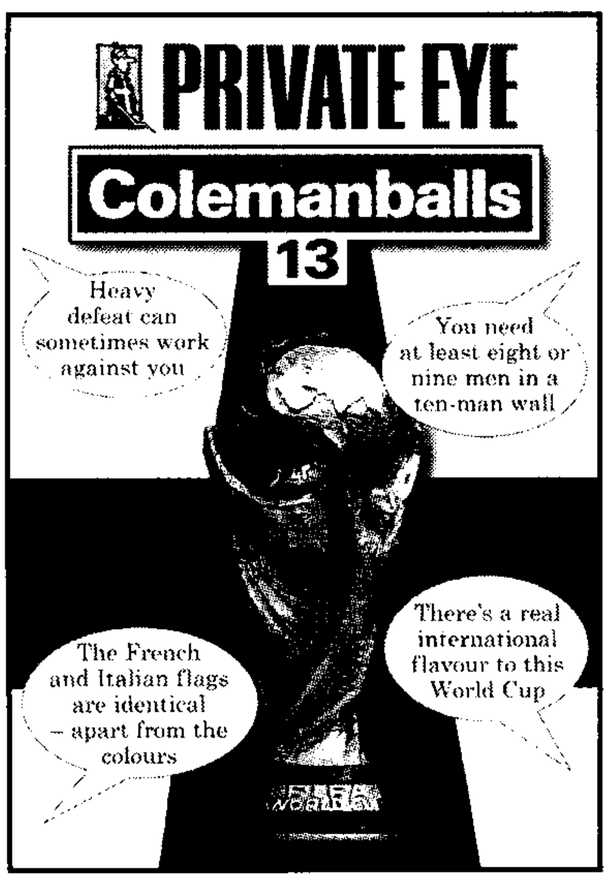
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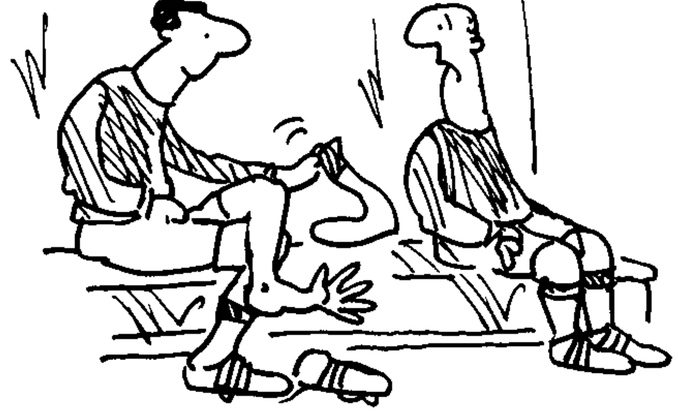

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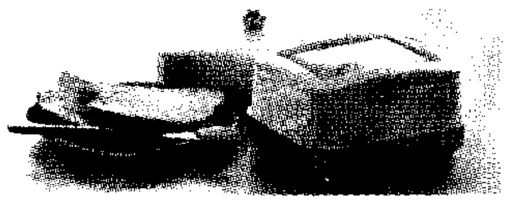

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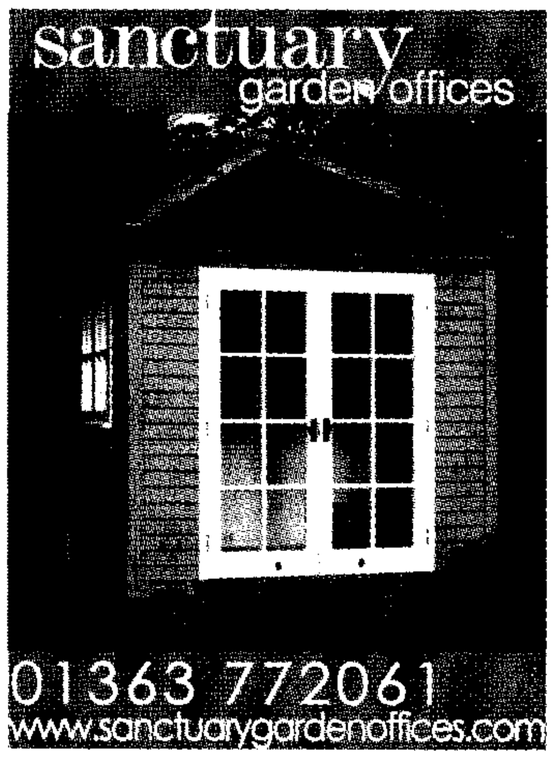

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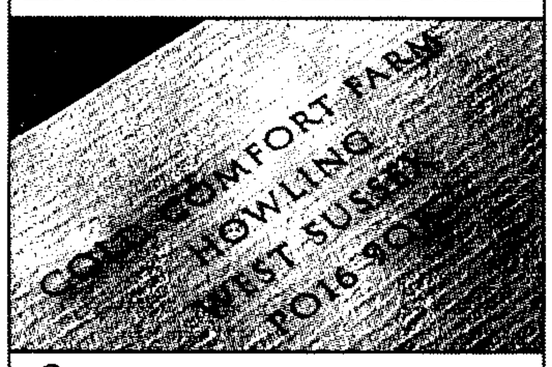

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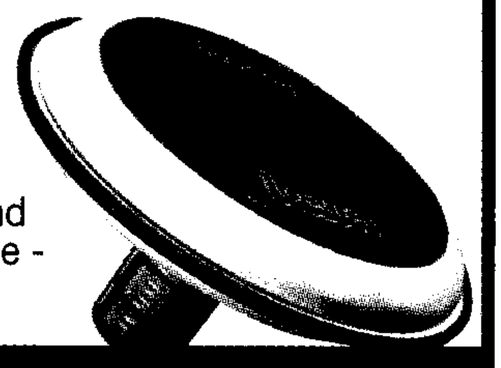

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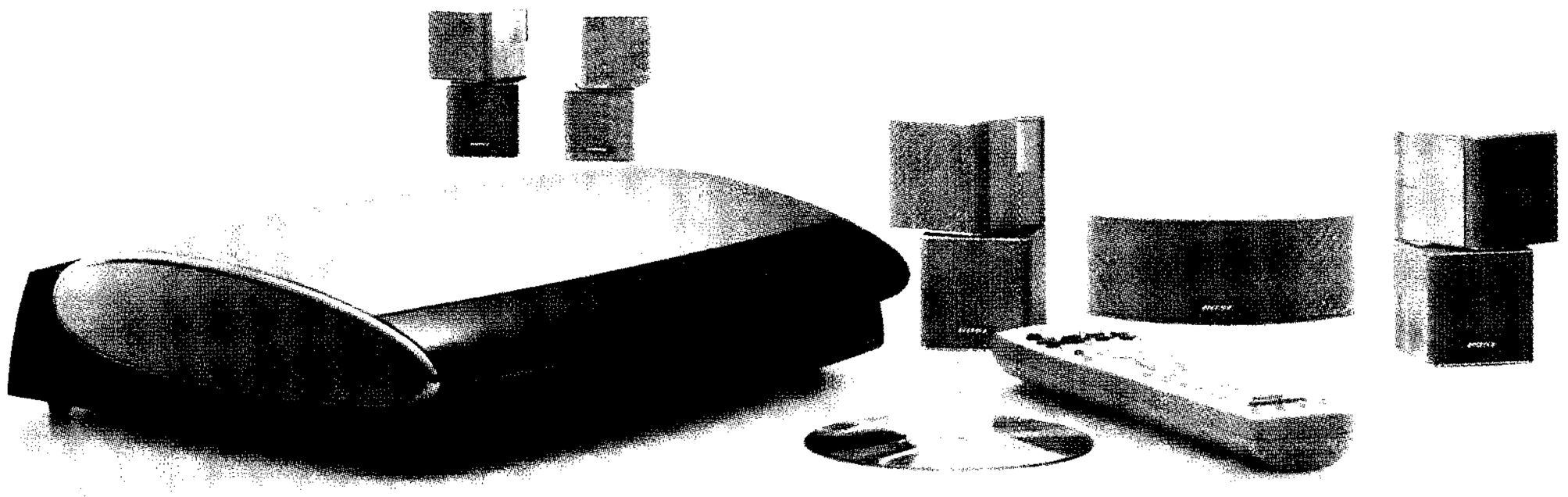

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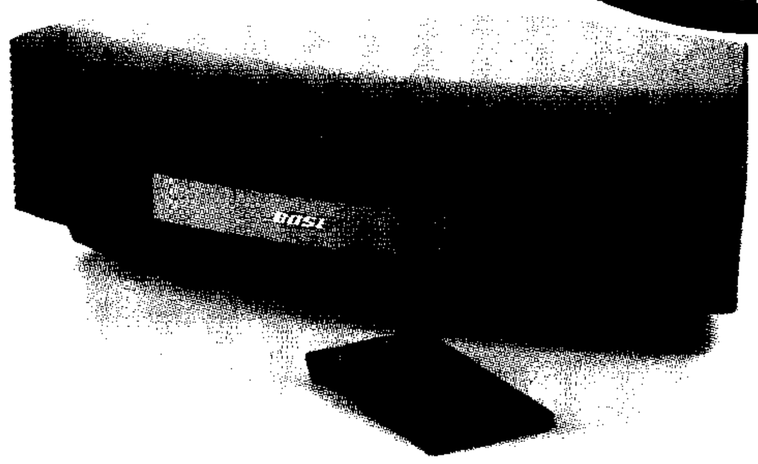

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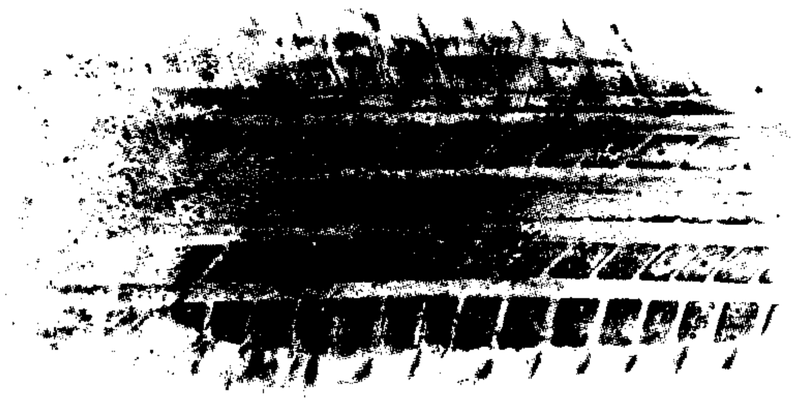

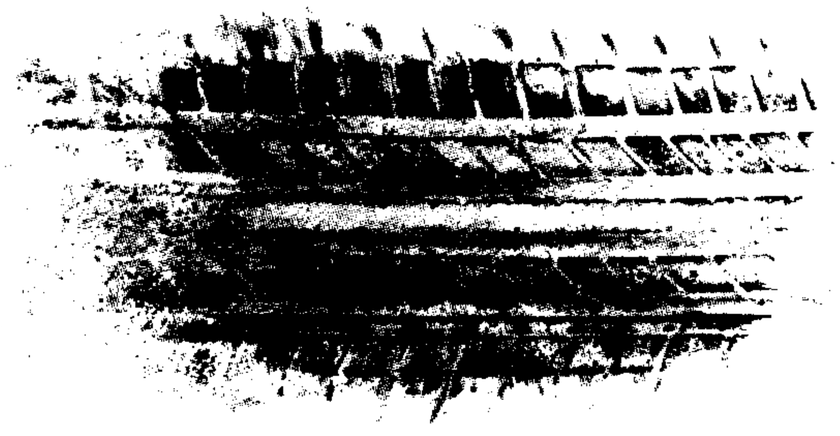

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